

COLONEL  
ANNESLEY'S  
DAUGHTERS







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*A NOVEL.*

*IN THREE VOLUMES.*

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### CHAPTER I.

**T**HE following day had been fixed for an expedition to Frankfort, and some of the party had already assembled on the platform at the railway station. A large saloon carriage capable of accommodating them all had been attached to the train for their convenience. The two Basileffs had not yet appeared.

“They will miss the train,” said Sir John, “It only wants three minutes to the time we start.”

"Surely they would have sent me word had they not been coming," observed Lady Clementina, "as I am supposed to be their chaperon."

"I hope they are none of them ill," said Beatrice; "they were not at the spring this morning."

"It is all right," called out Captain Barrington, who had remained standing on the platform watching for the absentees.

"Why are you so late?" greeted the two sisters from a chorus of voices.

"Look at the Princess Sophie," said Mr Lawleigh admiringly, to Captain Vavasour; "she is taking it very quietly. I do not think anything would ever make her hurry. She thinks trains, everything, and everybody should always consult her convenience. That is the way to get through life.

"Why are we so late?" cried Marie Basileff. "Indeed, you may well ask. A

great deal has happened to us, and more than enough. I was afraid we should end in not coming at all. We have had a horrible time of it ; and poor mamma is very upset, quite ill indeed. This morning we thought we should not be able to leave her ; but I would not let Sophie write to you, Lady Clem ; and mamma is a little better now, and wished us to come ; and she has old Fräulein with her, so it was a pity we should lose our fun."

"But what has happened to your mother, my dear little girl ?" said Sir John. "She was looking remarkably well last night, and very cheerful."

"Ah, but last night the most horrible thing you can conceive happened."

"My mother has had a great shock," said the Princess Sophie quietly.

"Let me speak," said Marie, interrupting her. "I can speak quicker than you ; besides, I feel so excited that I must talk.

Mamma had gone to bed, and had fallen asleep ; her bedroom adjoins our salon ; it was not originally a bedroom, but a second sitting-room, but for mamma's convenience they put a bed into it, and the bell, therefore, was not beside the bed, but close to the chimney on the opposite side of the room. She woke up some time in the middle of the night, and thought her night-light (she always has one of your English night-lights in her room) had caught fire, the paper of it, I mean ; it had happened before ; but she was sleepy and tired, and remained still. It went on burning, so at last she turned round to see if it' could set anything on fire ; as she turned, she saw a man standing by her bedside, in a grey flannel shirt. He had a knife in his hand. She felt a cold horror creeping over her. She looked at him, and he looked at her. As her eyes met his she saw he was mad, and

she remembered at once how helpless she was. She knew her only chance depended on her preserving her presence of mind.

“Plucky woman!” cried Sir John; “quite what I should expect of her.”

“She fixed her eyes on the man,” continued Marie, “and said, ‘Go out of my room instantly! you have no business here.’ She says she fancied he was a German, and so addressed him in that language. He turned quietly away, and walking up to the washing-stand proceeded to pour some water into the basin, and began washing his hands. Mamma says she felt so furious with him for his impertinence that she forgot her fright and everything else, and sitting up in bed screamed in an angry voice, ‘You impertinent man, how dare you do such a thing in my room? leave it instantly, this moment,—go!’ He turned away without looking at her, and went out.”

“How horrible!” cried the different listeners.

“And then in one moment mamma got out of bed, locked the door, and kept ringing her bell till she fell on the floor fainting. Fortunately the door into the salon was not locked, and they were able to get into her room that way.”

“But who was the man, and how did he get there?” asked Sir John.

“He was lodging in the same house with us,” replied Marie. “He had arrived that day, accompanied by his wife and daughter. They had not said a word about his being mad to the people of the house. Was it not a shame? The mother and daughter were sleeping downstairs in a room outside his, and he contrived to pass through without waking them up, and got out into the passage, and went up to mamma’s room.”

“They ought to be punished severely

for such conduct," said Horace Lawleigh. "You might all have been murdered in your beds."

"We sent at once for our doctor," replied Sophie, "and he was taken away this morning. Had he not gone away, you may be sure that we should have done so. The wife entreated to be allowed to stay, if only for a couple of days, as they were waiting to remove him to a friend's house, but our landlord, old Staubach, was inexorable. Not for a thousand marks a-day, he declared, would he allow him to remain. He was beside himself with rage, and has been storming and swearing all the morning. I really thought he would have a fit."

"But the Princess must be dreadfully shaken," said Lady Clementina.

"Indeed she is. She was quite unconscious for an hour or more, and when she recovered had a series of hysterical



fits. She is always nervous and easily upset."

"Well, she is a brave woman," observed Sir John. "Had she given way, there is no knowing what the fellow might not have done."

Nothing could be thought of but the history they had just heard; and they never ceased discussing it, and asking questions of the two sisters, till Frankfort was reached.

The palm gardens are pretty, but more extravagant praise would be beyond their desert. The bedding plants were well arranged, and the effect, as a whole, brilliant and varied, but, as Sir John observed to Beatrice, it was hardly up to the mark of what one saw every day at home. The houses were well stocked with plants, but nothing very rare or uncommon. The great house containing the palms, tree-ferns, and bamboos, was the most interest-

ing feature in the gardens, and Sir John, accompanied by Beatrice and his nephew, who generally found himself in the company of the latter, spent some time in making a tour of it.

“Fancy what they must be in their own country,” cried Sir John, pointing to some graceful feathery palm trees, “and think of those bamboos, acres of them so closely packed together that one is unable to force a way through them. It is a pretty sight altogether. I suppose that boarding at the end is the result of the fire of last year. How slippery these steps are,” he continued, as he descended from a sort of raised platform at one end of the house. “Look out, little one.”

Just as he spoke, Beatrice came down with a run, and would have fallen, had not Allan Barrington caught her.

“Did you hurt yourself?” he asked

quickly, while he still retained the hand he had taken.

“Oh! dear no, my foot slipped, and I am afraid that had you not been standing there, I might have measured my length on the damp ground, which would have been humiliating, to say the least of it, and not improving to my toilette. Oh! my bouquet, I did not know I had dropped it,” she continued, as she took the flowers which he had picked up, when he released her hand from his.

It was a bunch of carnations which he had given her that morning; he was in the habit of always presenting her with some flowers when they first met.

“I have to thank you, Miss Annesley,” he said, in a low voice. “You never forget my humble offerings.”

A doubt stole over Beatrice's mind for the first time, whether she was not perhaps wrong in always wearing the flowers he

gave her ; she had not thought of it before, and the expression of his eyes as he thanked her, made her cheek flush hotly, as she stammered out quickly,—

“I am so fond of flowers ; at home I always wear them in my dress,” but she felt slightly irritated at the look of satisfaction and the smile he gave as she spoke, and she rejoined Sir John with a subdued expression of countenance.

On several occasions lately she had found herself thinking of Allan Barrington, wondering why he was so kind to her and seemed to seek her out from among the others. He would often contrive to occupy the chair next to her at dinner ; he was ever ready to carry her shawl,—in fact, seemed always to be on the alert to perform any little service for her. She knew that she liked him very much when she came to think of it, perhaps better than anybody she knew. Hitherto, as far as she could

remember, nobody in the person of a young man had ever paid her any great attention ; it was true that she had not been much in society, and among the young men who came to the house Conty had always been the centre of attraction. One man only cared for her, and he could hardly be described as a young man ; he was the curate of the parish in their old Yorkshire home, and had known her from her childhood. A few months ago he came to call on them in London, and a very short time afterwards had repeated his visit. On the second occasion he told her that he was glad to find her alone, as his visit was intended for her only. He wanted to ask her to become his wife. Mr Ridley was a plain, worthy man of about forty years of age, the very last person she felt it would be possible to love or to marry. But, in spite of her surprise and her shyness, she summoned up her courage, and, in a straightforward though

kindly manner, contrived to make him understand how impossible it was for her to comply with his wishes. She had, after his departure, thrown herself back in a chair, and struggled against a very strong inclination to indulge in a hearty fit of laughter, as being unfeeling and ungrateful, and had contented herself with a fervent hope that nobody would dream of asking her to marry for at least some years.

That Allan Barrington was in love with her, had never entered into her thoughts, but there had been on that day a look in his eyes, and something in the pressure of his hand when he held hers, that set the girl's heart beating, and her thoughts in motion, and she remained close to Sir John, as if safety was thereby ensured.

"Dinner is ready," called Horace Lawleigh, as they emerged from the great conservatory.

"Captain Barrington, come and sit be-

tween Miss Annesley and me," cried the Princess Marie, "Captain Vavasour is going to sit on the other side of me."

"May I take this seat?" asked Mr Wilmington, addressing Beatrice, who had only made his acquaintance a few days previously; he was a friend of Hubert's, and a not very distant neighbour in the country. Beatrice smiled an assent. She liked both his manner and appearance. He was a good-looking man, tall, with a fair beard, and dark grey eyes; his face was rather thin, and very pale; it was a refined and an intellectual face.

"Don't you think your neighbour has a very chilly look about him, Bee?" asked Marie, leaning across Captain Barrington; "his face always reminds me of moonlight, it is so calm and impassive. I always long to stick some pins into him, to see whether he can feel. There are other kinds of pins besides these, you know, Bee, but I don't

fancy he would mind them much ; will you take it?" and she stretched her hand out to Beatrice. Captain Barrington tried to take the pin she held from her.

"Do not be afraid," she said. "I am not going to stick it into you. I do not think you would care much for this sort of pin-pricks, the other kind I expect would touch you up more. I want to see whether Mr Wilmington is made of flesh and blood, or stone."

"I think, Princess, sticking pins into people is more in your way than in that of Miss Annesley. I cannot imagine her administering either actual pin - pricks or metaphorical ones."

"How do you know?" retorted Marie sharply ; "do not be too sure of anything. Do not suppose you can always read a girl's character from what she says ; people generally say exactly the opposite of what they mean ; I often do."



“It is very kind of you to give me that information; is it to be applied to your conversation as the rule, or as the exception?”

“Find out for yourself,” was the reply, shortly given.

Mr Wilmington had entered into conversation with Beatrice, and as the little Russian was talking to Captain Vavasour, after a few minutes, having nobody to talk to, Allan Barrington began to feel rather bored, and soon after, decidedly sulky. Madame Arlini at last spoke to him across the table, where she was sitting beside Sir John.

“Have you settled yet what day you leave Homburg, Captain Barrington? your uncle seems rather undecided, and talks of going either to Switzerland, or perhaps on to the Italian lakes.”

“I fancy it will be the first,” replied Allan, “and what have you determined upon doing,

Marchesa? you seemed rather doubtful as to your own movements the other day."

"My husband talks of going to Paris, so I shall probably go to Vevey with my children, and remain there till he rejoins me."

"I hope you will go to Vevey, dear Marchesa," said Marie Basileff, turning round suddenly; nothing ever seemed to escape her ears, even when she herself was engaged in conversation; "because mamma has decided upon going there, and it will be so nice if you are there at the same time! What is the moonlight man talking of?" she asked, leaning forwards and looking at him.

"He is making himself agreeable, I suppose," replied Captain Barrington dryly; "he seems to have engrossed Miss Annesley's attention completely. He is laying down the law about something or other, considerably, it appears."

“ I feel sure he is not such a clever man as people suppose, though you see what an impressive manner he has when he speaks, so that when he utters some commonplace, or even perhaps a stupid thing, he says it in such a way as might induce you to believe he is asserting a great or interesting fact ; he would do very well for a clergyman ; how well that manner of his would tell in the pulpit. I cannot tell you why, but Mr Wilmington is a man I never like. I cannot get on with him. We used to see a great deal of him in Rome last winter ; he is a great friend of our cousin Constantine. Mamma and Sophie like him, and say he is such a thorough gentleman, so clever and well read, but he always makes me feel bored. Do you understand what I mean ? do you ever feel bored, or suffer from ennui ? ”

“ Most people do, I believe, sometimes ; I often do,” replied her companion. “ But

we ought to remember that it is said that suffering from ennui is a sign of being empty-minded ourselves."

"I suppose you mean that I am stupid, and have no ideas in my head. I think, Captain Barrington, you are very rude to tell me so to my face. I shall change my mind about you, and begin to dislike you, and I will tell Bee what you say, and I am sure she will alter her opinion of you."

"Why?" he asked, rather eagerly; "has she been kind enough to pass a favourable judgment on me?"

"Do you suppose I am going to tell you what she says of you; *pas si bête*," replied the girl, laughing in an impish way; "they say women are vain, but it is a great mistake to suppose they are more so than men; you care just as much to be well thought of as we do. You care quite as much about your personal attrac-

tions ; your dress certainly does not enable you to make much display, but in the days when men wore velvet and satin coats, gold embroidery, and lace ruffles, depend upon it they were quite as extravagant and more so than the women were. I do not pretend to be indifferent to dress, on the contrary, I love it—all women do, one would be only half a woman if one did not. I never believe in that old saying about beauty when unadorned, adorned the most ; there is no truth in it, and if there were, it would only apply to very young people, who are possessed of what one calls ‘ *beauté du diable*.’ ”

“ I agree with you,” said Sir John, across the table. “ I like to see a woman well dressed, and your countrywomen, Princess, take a prominent place in that branch of a woman’s duties.”

“ I am afraid, Sir John, we owe our millinery to Paris. Though I detest the

French as a nation, we owe them a great debt of gratitude on that score, so there is something to be said for them after all."

"Truly, a speciality for dressing ladies is a fine feature in the characteristics of a nation," said Captain Barrington ironically.

"Well, what have you to say of my countrymen, young lady?" asked Sir John.

"Ah! I must think," replied Marie smiling. "Well, Sir John, the English were admirably described by a French writer; I do not remember his name or where I read it, but he said: 'Ils veulent que les hommes soient hommes, et ils n'estiment que deux choses, les richesses et le mérite.'"

"You have a good memory," answered Sir John; "I know the passage well."

"And how about the Italians?" asked Madame Arlini. "Cannot you find some-

thing pleasant to say of my countrymen?"

"The Italians always seem to me the most natural people," replied Marie, laughing. "They remind me of children, quick, impetuous, full of good resolutions, carried away by any excitement, always sincere at the moment; but they have no unity, no steadiness. They ceased to be great (and no people ever were so great once) when the empire came to an end. I suppose they were like plants that had been too highly forced and cultivated: they had lived an unnatural existence, and their constitutions were enfeebled."

"That is not a very complimentary view of us as a nation," observed Madame Arlini.

"But I do not for one moment venture to think I am stating historical facts. I am only talking any nonsense that comes into my head. I generally am in the habit of doing so."

“Yes,” said Sir John, giving her one of his genial smiles ; “I think you do generally speak out whatever comes uppermost in your mind.”

“You will hardly say anything civil of the French, Princess,” remarked Allan Barrington, “as you say you dislike them.”

“No ; I do not like the French,” replied Marie warmly. “One must acknowledge that they are very clever ; but they are so conceited, such boasters. They know but one country in the world, France ; one city, Paris. Read their history, that alone will show you what they are, how unstable, never to be depended on, never satisfied, ever striving to be first ; and then how little, if any, sense of religion or morality they have ; I mean as a people. Now, the Germans are honest, though they think quite enough of themselves ; one gets so bored with their Geist and their poetry ; they think themselves so philosophical, and



there is so much affectation in it. But they are a great people, that nobody can deny. They have done more for themselves for years than any other nation. They have all the plodding energy of the English; they can concentrate themselves, and not be always breaking up into a hundred different parties, like their neighbours the French, each one thinking only of himself; and they have a strong feeling of promoting the general welfare of their country. Of my own country I will say nothing. I could say a good deal, there is so much I disapprove of. The Turks are not half a bad people, if they were decently governed. The Greeks are liars and cheats. Of the Spaniards, I hardly know anything, and the little I know I do not care for. Now, do not laugh at me," she continued, frowning at Sir John, who was leaning back in his chair and indulging in a fit of merriment; "it is not fair; you asked me,

you know. I daresay I am not old enough to have an opinion at all, and still less to give one to other people."

"Pray do not apologise," replied Sir John. "There is a great deal of truth in what you say; wandering about as much as you have done, must have opened your eyes, and, young as you are, you must have met a good many people."

"I have been seeing people of all sorts ever since I can remember, Sir John; but I do not know that it has done me much good. We do not learn much by looking at people; one must hear them speak, and one must listen to them. Sophie is kind enough to say that I never listen. I am too fond of talking myself."

"But there are some people," observed Allan, "whom you could hardly judge fairly merely by hearing them speak: there are people who rarely do themselves justice in speech. I mean, their powers of

thinking are greater than their gift of language."

"And others," said Marie, laughing merrily, "talk nonsense, because they have no thoughts to express. I suppose in that case it would indeed be 'silver is speech, but silence gold.'"

"Conversation is anything but an easy art, my dear young lady," remarked Sir John; "a great deal is required to make it really pleasant."

"It requires brains, of course," answered Marie.

"It requires more than that. You will find people often err in conversation by caring only to talk of what interests themselves; and they show often but a small appreciation of the opinion of others; and then, again, you sometimes find a certain indifference as to jarring on the feelings or principles of others. I do not at all mean that we should give up our

own opinion merely to please another, but that some deference should be manifested to the opinion of others."

"But, Sir John," said Marie, quickly, "if people are wrong, they must be converted, and made to see straight. It is good for everybody."

"That is true; but the difference of opinion should be conveyed in a courteous manner. No man has a right to thrust his opinions down anybody's throat."

"When people talk to me," said Marie, turning to Allan, "I like them to amuse me,—to tell me stories, something new. Half the young men I meet are so stupid, they never say anything original. I do not want to be told I dance divinely."

"You know it already, I suppose."

"Of course I do; and perhaps when I have been playing not nearly as well as I can, to be told that my playing of Chopin

is quite admirable ! I can scarcely help laughing in their faces."

"But you could scarcely justify bad manners, whatever the provocation might be," he answered, shaking his head reprovably.

"Ah ! but Sophie says I have no manners. I find it rather convenient sometimes. What a conversation Bee and Mr Wilmington are keeping up. I wonder whether they are neglecting any of the rules of conversation. What are they talking of ?"

"Prisons, I fancy," replied Allan Barrington shortly.

"Is that why you are looking so cross and unhappy, Captain Barrington ?"

"Because they are talking about prisons ? Why should I ?"

"Not because of the subject, exactly," she replied, laughing. "One subject would not be more objectionable than any other. You know what I mean."

"I am afraid I fail to understand the gist of your remark."

"Do you really? Well, I will enlighten you. Little as I know you, I have found out that you like having everything your own way; and just now you have not got it, consequently you are a little bit cross."

"It is a very unfortunate disposition on my part, as it has rarely fallen to my lot to get my own way, as you express it."

"No, I daresay not; you are only one of many, so you must put up with it."

"I am at a loss to understand what you mean," again answered Captain Barrington.

"Oh, yes, you do understand. At this moment you are feeling cross because Bee is talking to Mr Wilmington instead of talking to you. Of course, if people speak to her, she must listen to them. You ought to be pleased to see how much he appears to appreciate her. Why, his moonlight face is looking quite animated. I never should

have thought prisons could be such an interesting subject," she added, leaning back in her chair, and laughing heartily.

Captain Barrington suppressed a devout wish that his companion were less outspoken, or that she would control her tongue somewhat more.

"You must talk to me, Captain Barrington," said Marie, folding her fan with a jerk ; "you cannot help yourself, because I have nobody else to talk to. Captain Vavasour *will* talk to Lady Denzil. I am sorry, because he amuses me ; he is so utterly silly."

"I can only hope that in that case I do not succeed in amusing you."

"Oh, yes, you do, but in another way. Grown-up people are very like children after all. I am getting very tired of the dinner, are not you ? It is so long and so hot ; and what a noise they are making. My head aches."

"It is not very bad, I hope," said Allan, politely.

"Not very ; but I am like a little watch, the works soon get out of order."

"What was the name of that picture of Raphael's, of which you showed me a photograph ?" asked Beatrice, addressing Captain Barrington.

"Which ?" he asked, rather stiffly ;  
"A Holy Family ?"

"The one of the Virgin, with an angel below. You told me the original was in the Vatican."

"You mean the Madonna del Folligno."

"That is a grand picture," said Mr Wilmington, leaning forward. "I prefer it myself to the Transfiguration. Have you photographs of the other pictures in the same room ?"

"I happened to have a few photographs with me, and I was showing them to Miss



Annesley the other day," Allan answered, still coldly.

He felt Beatrice had neglected him, but he could hardly keep up a feeling of resentment when he met her frank, beautiful eyes as she spoke to him. Mr Wilmington continued speaking, leaning forward slightly.

"I do not think, as a rule, I care most for pictures of sacred subjects, with a few exceptions; they so often offend one's tastes. It seems almost a sin to depict a feeble, sentimental-looking being as a likeness of our Saviour, or a vulgar peasant woman or worse as the Virgin. And yet, what can you expect of a painter, who has often a coarse, low mind; who has little if any sense of religion,—a man who has never even faintly realised the greatness of his subject. He is attempting to paint what is not *in* him. How can one expect him to bring it forth on his canvas?"

“ ‘What can you expect from a pig but a grunt?’ ” asked Marie, who was listening to Mr Wilmington’s remarks.

“All that sounds very true,” said Beatrice; “but it makes me feel sad, for I have been so looking forward to seeing some of these great pictures, of which I have heard so much.”

“But there are some pictures,” observed Allan, “to which that criticism, true as it may be of many, does not apply; and this Madonna of Raphael’s is one of them. Is there any chance of your going on to Italy?” he asked Beatrice, determined, now he had got her attention, to keep it to himself.

“I do not know, but I should think probably not. Hubert talks of going to Interlachen after he leaves Heidelberg.”

“Perhaps, in that case, we may meet, Miss Annesley; for my uncle is thinking of going into Switzerland.”

Captain Barrington scanned the profile beside him, closely, but could trace no sign of satisfaction at the prospect of meeting him again shortly.

Soon after, the dinner came to an end. He remained close to Beatrice, who had joined Madame Arlini on leaving the dining-room, and they walked out into the garden.

"I think that was the longest dinner I ever sat through," observed Allan; "and how oppressively hot!"

"It was hot, certainly, but I did not find it long," replied the Marchesa. "Sir John is a very pleasant companion. You ought not to have found it so long,—it sounds as if you had not been amused; but you had nothing to complain of, as you were placed between two young ladies."

"One of them would not talk to me," he answered, "and the other talked too much,—at least, I am afraid I did not appreciate her remarks."

“That is hardly civil, Captain Barrington. The Princess Marie is very good-tempered, she is bright and unaffected; and she was very lively to-day, I am sure.”

“Oh, she is charming, I have not a doubt! I do not mean to say a word against her, but I do not think she much minds what she says.”

“She is young; she will soon learn to be conventional; there is no harm in her.”

“Captain Vavasour has made a rhyme about me,” cried the young lady in question, running up to them. “Of course, it is a nonsense one, and is rather impertinent. He calls me Pat sometimes, because he says I have an Irish way of expressing myself. It runs thus:—

‘There was a young lady call’d Pat,  
Who wore velvet all round her hat;  
In very fine weather, she put on a blue feather,  
Which pleased that young lady call’d Pat.’

Is it not beautifully idiotic? I told him he was very cheeky, and he asked me how I should translate 'cheeky' into French. I said I had never heard its equivalent, but that, as it was more in his line than mine, he might make a better guess at it. He thought for a moment, and then, turning his pale blue eyes on mine, said, with a saucy smile, 'I should say to you, in that case, mademoiselle, vous avez affreusement beaucoup de joue.' Did I not tell you he was too utterly silly?"

They wandered round the garden for some little time, till Mr Lawleigh joined them and told them it was time to be off to the station.

"There are plenty of flies outside the garden," he continued.

Beatrice hastened to join her sister, who was walking with Captain Vavasour by her side. She wondered why Conty persisted in letting him always follow her about,

knowing, as she well did, how much it annoyed Hubert.

"I will take my wife's shawl," said Hubert, as he joined them.

"It is no trouble, my dear fellow," answered Captain Vavasour. "Don't deprive me of the pleasure of performing so small a service for Lady Denzil."

But Hubert vouchsafed no answer, only holding out his hand for the shawl, which Captain Vavasour was obliged to relinquish.

On leaving the gardens, Hubert hailed the first fly and handed in his wife and Beatrice.

Captain Vavasour drew back.

"Had you not better come with us?" said Constance, smiling.

At the same moment Hubert called out to Sir John,—

"We have room for you here."

"Hubert, do you not hear?" asked

Constance, with a frown. "I have asked Captain Vavasour to come with us."

"Never mind me!" cried Sir John; "there are plenty of other flies; drive on."

Hubert darted a look of great wrath at his wife, and then kept a total silence the whole way to the station.

Constance, meanwhile—seeming bent, as Beatrice thought, on doing all she could to aggravate and worry Hubert—kept up a continual flow of small talk with Captain Vavasour, giggling and laughing over his small jokes in a way that even to Beatrice, generally so tolerant, was intensely annoying.

How changeable and unreliable her sister was! she thought;—trying to appear, what she could not even succeed in doing well—a thorough flirt. After so few months of marriage, it seemed to her incredible that any woman could show such an utter disregard for the feelings of her husband.

What a dreadful thing a love of admiration was! How completely it degraded and lowered a woman's whole nature!

The drive, though a short one, appeared interminably long, and on reaching the station, they at once took their places in the saloon carriage. Beatrice, determined to keep close to her sister, sat down beside her, and Hubert took a place on the other side. Captain Vavasour remained standing on the platform, watching the arrival of the rest of the party, who came in detachments.

Constance, as if resenting the surveillance imposed on her, was sulky, scarcely even replying to Sir John's inquiries as to whether she were tired.

It was with a feeling of some relief that Beatrice found herself at Homburg; and after farewells had been exchanged, she turned to follow Constance, when the latter suddenly stopped, and, turning back, called to Captain Vavasour, saying,—



“Be sure to secure the tennis-ground to-morrow at four o'clock.”

In silence they walked home, and when at last they found themselves in their sitting-room, Constance desired her sister to follow her to her room.

“Excuse me,” said Hubert, as she was about to comply with her sister’s wishes, “but I wish to speak to Constance myself, so we will say good-night now.”

Beatrice sat by her window, enjoying the cool breeze which had sprung up. What a deadly wrong this marriage of her sister’s had been. Hubert’s life would become, unless there was some change, a burden and a curse to him. A feeling of shame rushed over her at the thought that her own dearly loved sister could be capable of conduct so mean and so disloyal.

Poor Guy! how she had pitied him; but was he not rather to be envied in having escaped from a life which to his nature

would have been even more intolerable than to Hubert. She well knew he was a man who would have endured no coldness when he loved deeply, brooked no disregard of his wishes, — a man with a keen sense of honour himself, and to whom the smallest subterfuge, the least deviation from the truth, would be repugnant.

“His love would have died had he found her unworthy, while Hubert will be utterly wretched, but will never love her less,” she murmured, half aloud. “How will it end? —how will it end?”





## CHAPTER II.

**T**HE next day Constance had a severe headache. Hubert was wretched, was ready even to blame himself for having perhaps frightened her by losing his temper. Constance had said she was sorry to have vexed him, more she would not say, but Hubert was only too glad to catch at any appearance of softness on her part. Beatrice felt her temper somewhat tried, for she had very little sympathy with his fears as to his wife's nervous system having received a severe shock owing to his intemperate language. She felt a sincere desire to believe that

anything would or could influence Conty ; and the result of a conversation she had in the morning with her sister, had left anything but a pleasant impression on her mind. She considered there was very little sense of wrong-doing in the sufferer's heart, and a great deal of hardness ; and she felt so much disposed altogether to blame her, that she began seriously to doubt whether she was not growing herself too hard and censorious. Constance had reluctantly agreed, after a great deal of pressure from her sister, to give up playing her match at tennis that afternoon, should her head become easier. A drive had been organised to see the remains of a Roman camp at the Saalburg ; however, Constance declined joining in the expedition, and had actually accepted a proposal from Hubert to take a short drive instead with him. Beatrice fell again to wondering whether she was not misjudging her sister, and

whether she had been just in thinking she had no sense of sorrow for vexing her husband. "It is a bad habit to be perpetually analysing people's motives," she thought ; "Miss Leslie always told me I had too great a tendency to do so." So she redoubled her efforts at trying to be helpful to Hubert, and to do all she could towards bringing her sister to be more gentle in her manner towards him.

At four o'clock Sir John's voice was heard below, and soon after, he entered the saloon, saying,—

"It is a lovely afternoon for a drive. Are you not sorry, Lady Denzil, that you decided against joining us?"

"No, I cannot say I am ; I do not care about ruins, and I have promised to drive with Hubert, and afterwards we shall join Lady Clementina at tea-time."

"Well, Miss Bee, the carriage is at the door, Allan is finishing a cigar outside,

and the two Basileffs were coming down the street as I came up here, so we had better be going. Mr Lawleigh and the Marchesa are in the carriage already."

"How I hate a waggonette," said Horace Lawleigh ; "it is locomotion, certainly, with all its unpleasant qualities and none of the agreeable ones. You only see one side of the country, and are being perpetually swayed from one side to the other, to say nothing of being jolted forwards, to the imminent risk of concussion of the brain to oneself or one's opposite neighbour."

"I feel so unsafe in a waggonette," cried Marie Basileff ; "it is so big, and so high, and one could never jump out quickly if anything happened."

"Lucky for you, then, my dear young lady," observed Sir John ; "for jumping out of a carriage, except under very exceptional circumstances, is a thing to be avoided."

"Ah ! but I am so afraid ; everybody, I

suppose, fears something ; my special fear is being smashed in a carriage. Don't laugh, Mr Lawleigh, in that unfeeling way. You may be brave enough about that, but I daresay there are some things of which you too may be afraid."

"I did not mean to be unfeeling, Princess ; as to being brave, that depends on a good many things ;—ignorance of our danger often prevents our feeling fear ; whereas, sometimes ignorance as to the possibility or probability of an accident happening to us, makes us cowardly. When you are in a heavy carriage like this one, driven by a man who knows his horses, and horses, poor brutes, who have all the life and spirit crushed out them, it is merely your ignorance which leads you to fear. People are brave who, knowing their danger, never lose their heads, or rather their presence of mind."

"That is one aspect of bravery," said Sir John ; "there is mental courage as well as

physical ; the former is the higher quality, mere animal spirits help a man in the latter."

"Well, I wish to be courageous, but I never shall be," cried Marie ; "wishing does no good, I am sure ; if it did I should be so perfect by this time that I should have flapped up long ago."

"I do not agree with you, Marie," said her sister gravely ; "to wish or desire anything strongly is the first instinct in our natures ; it leads us to desire to do a virtuous action, or a wicked one ; now, it is a voluntary thing on our part to do either, therefore as wishing may influence us, it is not a useless thing. To be either good or wicked is in our power, and there is no doubt we can refrain from being either."

"Humph !" ejaculated Mr Lawleigh, in a dissenting voice. "I am not of your opinion, Princess ; some people, I should say, seem to have no power of



being virtuous, they are of the earth earthy; really vicious men or women cannot make themselves virtuous by wishing."

"Not by wishing only," said Beatrice, in a low voice; "surely something more is needed."

"And what misery sin brings," observed Madame Arlini musingly; "it is wonderful on that account alone that people seem able to resign themselves so entirely to it, and make no greater effort to cast it away from them."

"I maintain," replied Mr Lawleigh, "that sin does not make all people wretched; some indeed seem to find it agrees very well with their ideas of happiness. Some of the greatest philosophers and most scientific men, have indulged in lives tainted with what you would call sin."

"Ah! but, Mr Lawleigh," replied the Marchesa quickly, "it is surely better to be

virtuous than to be scientific. Happiness is the object of all people's lives, and virtue alone can bring that about. Science may feed our minds, but does not bring happiness."

"Yes," said Sir John. "Aristotle has said, 'Happiness is the working of the soul.'"

"Also," said Mr Lawleigh, "I remember he asserts that in sleep good people are less to be distinguished from evil ones, so we all meet on equal ground sometimes. Another remark of his occurs to me; he declares that, during one-half of our lives, there is no difference between the happy and the unhappy."

"After all," observed Sir John, "I agree with you, Marchesa, nobody ought to deny that moral excellence is a far higher thing than intellectual excellence; the last is acquired by training, the other is inborn and the gift of God."

“I cannot agree with you, Sir John,” remarked Horace Lawleigh; “they are, to my mind, both of them the result of training. I do not believe in anybody’s being born good; virtue is proved by action, action is directed by reason, therefore a man must have intellectual powers, and so it may be fairly argued that the great thing to be desired is intellectual training.”

“But, surely,” said Beatrice, “you may sacrifice too much to intellectual training; people who cultivate their intellects so highly often end in believing in nothing; and you will admit that there are some things which our intellects alone can never properly understand or appreciate.”

“Well, Miss Annesley, do you think it would therefore be better to shut up your reason, as so many women do, instead of striving to find out something for yourself? Merely to follow in the footsteps of others like sheep is scarcely worthy of a

being capable of reasoning. I put reason before everything else, it is the faculty we should most strive to cultivate and develop, for it is by reason alone that we can hope to arrive at the knowledge of the difference between good and evil."

"Yes," replied Beatrice; "but does not goodness depend more on the soul than on the mind?"

"Still, Miss Annesley, I reply that if your mind, or rather that part of it called your reason, is not active, there is nothing to guide your moral feelings and make you properly appreciate moral excellence."

"It is a tendency in human nature, Mr Lawleigh," said the Princess Sophie, "to like and admire what suits our own taste; you appreciate intellect, consequently you desire that everybody should do the same."

"I presume you mean me to understand, Princess, that I appreciate mental more than moral qualities?"

“I have no doubt you do, Mr Lawleigh, but I am not sure that you have gained by putting such a great value merely on them, because it has made you inclined to trust so entirely to your reason ; now there are some facts (I speak of those especially connected with revealed religion), which I have heard you dispute and deny. I believe they are undoubted facts, and that being so, nobody ought to dispute their existence.”

“But how do you know they *are* facts ?” asked Mr Lawleigh ; “have you ever really proved their truth ?”

“I have often heard them asserted to be facts, by people who have thoroughly studied the subject, and whose opinions are therefore valuable ; is not that enough ?”

“Most certainly not. Ah ! my dear Princess, woman-like, I see you prefer the subjective to the objective method in argument.”

“The what?” cried Marie; “what on earth are you talking about?”

“What is the difference between the two?” asked Sophie Basileff, “do they not both admit of facts?”

“Most assuredly; the difference is that in the subjective method facts are (as you were doing) assumed, not verified and proved to be really true; in the objective they are verified. Women as a rule, I may say invariably, prefer the former method.”

“Naturally,” replied Sophie Basileff scornfully. “That being something less logical, inferior, and a sign of a feebleness of intellect, they will be sure to prefer it.”

“The constitution of their minds naturally inclines that way, I think; women like to arrive at conclusions quickly, they do not like to be wearied by the detail and labour of following out with care and accuracy the chain of reasoning; their

education as well as their mental calibre is against it."

"Yes, I suppose, Mr Lawleigh, it is what is to be expected from persons whose minds are always dwelling on trifles, and fed with frivolities; they can never hope to be deep thinkers, or to have strong reasoning powers."

"I did not say so, Princess; but the habit of taking more blame to ourselves than we deserve is by no means a proof of humility, it is more often the result of wounded vanity than real conviction."

"Your remark may be true, Mr Lawleigh, but it is hardly very polite."

"Now that, you will forgive me for saying, is an essentially feminine observation. Women always expect in an argument to be treated with deference; whereas argument should be free and untrammelled by a desire to spare the feelings and sensibilities of another."

“True,” replied the Princess gravely, “we ought always to remember everybody has their pet weakness ; mine, I imagine, you consider to be vanity.”

“No, not yours in particular ; I should say rather that of women collectively ; you I should think are proud more than vain.”

“And, as we have been told that vanity is a greater sign of humility than pride, I ought to feel greatly obliged to you for your good opinion of me.”

“What a long hill this is,” observed Marie ; “what is going to happen now ?” and she started suddenly from her seat. “The horses will not go on ; are we going to be upset, Captain Barrington ?”

“Oh ! no,” he replied, from his seat on the box, “the horses are only a little disposed to jib, they find us rather a heavy load, I expect. I shall get down and walk.”

“So will not I,” remarked Horace Law-



leigh ; “ with a thermometer at eighty in the shade, I do not fancy facing this hill.”

“ If the horses are going to jib I shall get out too,” cried Marie ; “ something will be sure to happen. I have been nearly killed twice, and I do not like it at all.”

“ Sit still,” replied her sister, “ you are always prophesying misfortunes, it does not follow they will happen.”

“ Yes ; but—but they might happen. I wish you knew how uncomfortable it is to be afraid, Mr Lawleigh, and then you would find something to do instead of laughing at me. You are just the sort of person who is never afraid of anything.”

“ Pardon me,” he replied ; “ but I could get up a very decent show of fear if I found anything to justify it. I have my pet fears as well as you, though they may be on different subjects.”

“ Now tell me, then, what would be the thing you feared most ? ”

After a moment's reflection, Mr Lawleigh answered slowly,—

“On the whole, I think I should have a greater fear of poverty than of any other evil.”

“You are not singular in your fears,” replied Marie, laughing, in which the rest of the party all joined.

“There are worse things than poverty, to my mind,” said Sir John; “what say you to a life of perpetual sickness and suffering?”

“Or of disgrace brought on us by our actions?” suggested Beatrice. “I am sure death would be preferable to that.”

“How *triste* you all are,” cried Marie. “We came out for some fun, and then you do nothing but talk of horrors, or of all the vices and virtues in creation. I do not think it is at all amusing.”

“You should like to be instructed, Princess,” observed Mr Lawleigh; “you should

not always be thinking of pleasure ; that is not the end of life, except with children."

"You are preaching what you do not practise," answered Marie sharply. "I am certain that nobody seeks more after pleasure than you do. Why everything you say and do proves it. You like pleasure quite as much as I do ; only we do not find it in the same things, and I am quite sure my ideas of pleasure are much more innocent than yours !"

"It does not follow," answered Horace Lawleigh, "that all that is not bad is good."

"How you take to pieces everything one says. All I know is that I love pleasure and hate pain, and I take a great deal of trouble in trying to secure the one and avoid the other."

"You have my best wishes for your success," replied Mr Lawleigh, with a bow.

"Do you go straight to Heidelberg on leaving here ?" asked Sir John of Beatrice.

“ Yes ; I believe so ; we shall probably stay there a day or two and then go on to Interlachen. We have not yet quite decided whether we leave here by the early morning train or at night.”

“ Railway travelling is very comfortable and easy in this part of the world,” continued Sir John ; “ the railway officials are all very civil, rather a contrast to their neighbours, the French, and what a fine-looking set of men they are !”

“ Yes,” said Allan Barrington, turning round towards the occupants of the carriage, “ you will observe they are almost all men who have served in the army ; doubtless that accounts for their superior appearance.”

“ They talk of French politeness,” cried Marie, “ was there ever such a mistake ? the railway guards are all perfect bears. I remember one at Avignon who was in charge of the waiting-room, and he was an old

soldier too, Captain Barrington, for he had some medals on. I told him I had read in one of the French papers that they were going to leave off the absurd habit of shutting one into the waiting-room, like animals in a pen. He did not answer. I repeated my remark, and then he grunted, ‘Soyez tranquille.’ I got so angry with him that I told him we were not a lot of soldiers to be ordered about like slaves.”

“What did he say?” asked Beatrice, laughing.

“He muttered to himself,—‘Qu’elle est donc bête!’ I could have killed that old man, I was so angry; are your officials civil in England, Bee?”

“Generally I should say they were, but if you travel much about Lancashire, you may meet with some curious specimens in that class. Papa has a story about one of them, which always amuses me.”

“Tell it me, do, Bee; I love your stories.”

“ Papa was travelling one day on the London and North - Western Railway, through Lancashire, and he says he was never more struck by the freedom and independence of the natives of that part of the world. A porter was running up and down the platform, at one of the stations, shouting out,—‘ All ye folks for Chickabid, Chowbed, Blacklane, and them parts, girr out.’ A gentleman, who was seated in a first-class compartment called out,—‘ Porter, you shouldn’t speak in that way ; you should say: Passengers will be kind enough to change carriages here.’ The only answer the porter gave was,—‘ All ye folk for Chickabid, Chowbed, Blacklane, and them parts, girr out.’ This was more than the gentleman could stand, so he called out indignantly,—‘ I say, porter, do you know who I am ? ’ ‘ Know who you are,’ sneered the porter quietly, ‘ Matthew White, secretary to the London and North-Western Railway, three thousand

a-year, and nowt to do—now all ye folks for Chickabid, Chowbed, Blacklane, and them parts, girr out.’ ”

“ Capital ! ” said Sir John ; “ tells a story well, doesn’t she ? ”

“ That man was too amusing, the porter I mean,” observed Marie. “ What a fool Mr Matthew White must have felt.”

“ We are arrived at our destination,” said Allan Barrington, “ and the driver is anxious to know whether he shall pull up at the restauration, or whether you will go on a little further to the camp ; it is only a few steps from here.”

“ Let us stop here,” exclaimed Marie, “ and we will have some chocolate ! ”

“ That, I presume, comes under the head of pleasure in your eyes, Princess,” remarked Mr Lawleigh, “ and as it does not happen to run contrary to mine, I vote we stop here.”

The ruins were rather a disappointment

to Beatrice, who expected something picturesque, and had brought her sketch-book. Nothing but the merest outlines of the Roman camp were to be discerned, but she followed Sir John, listening attentively to all he told her about them, and after a short time they found they had exhausted all that was to be seen. And then ensued a short consultation as to whether they should return home by another route, to which Madame Arlini and Beatrice strongly inclined, but it was ultimately decided to go back the way they had come, as it was getting too late to prolong their drive.

“We must not keep the dinner waiting,” observed Horace Lawleigh; “your husband is very particular on that point, Marchesa.”

Yes, Madame Arlini was well aware his views on that subject.

“If we have not seen much, at any rate we have had a pretty drive,” said Sir John, “and pleasant company, I have found.”



They were slowly descending the long hill soon after leaving the Saalburg, when a sudden jerk was felt.

“What is the matter?” cried Marie, starting to her feet, and clutching hold of Mr Lawleigh’s arm; “the horses cannot be going to jib this time, because we are going down hill.”

“No, they cannot, as you most sapiently observe,” replied Mr Lawleigh. “I verily believe you are a perfect Jonah,” he continued, laughing; “your presence seems fated to bring misfortune. By Jove! he’s down though,” he cried, leaning over the side of the carriage. One horse had stumbled and fallen; he contrived, after a struggle, to regain his footing, but in the fall the pole was broken. In one second Captain Barrington realised the danger of their position, as the horses bolted, rocking the carriage from side to side. He wrested the reins from the hands of the frightened coachman, who seemed to have completely lost his head.

Away flew the horses, maddened by the weight of the carriage running on them.

“We shall be killed!” shrieked Marie wildly.

“There is no use screaming, you will only make matters worse,” answered Mr Lawleigh, not unkindly. “Try and keep quiet.”

Madame Arlini and the Princess Sophie had both turned deadly white. Marie began to sob. Mr Lawleigh endeavoured to open the door of the carriage, in which he found some difficulty ; however he succeeded at last, and got one foot on to the step below, Beatrice, who was sitting opposite him, trying to steady him by holding his arm.

Allan Barrington was a strong man, but it required all his strength to carry out the only thing which appeared to him feasible, and that was to pull the horses into the bank itself, on one side of the road, which, lower down, was about six feet high. He

succeeded just at the very spot where the bank was highest, and the carriage stopped with a violent shock, sending the occupants flying into each other's arms. In another moment, Allan was at the horses' heads, they having jumped the bank, where they remained kicking and plunging more slowly and deliberately. White with fear the coachman joined him,—some men, working in a field close by, came up and assisted in getting out the horses. Mr Lawleigh, who had been nearly precipitated head foremost when the carriage had stopped, helped the others to alight.

“Thank God,” said Madame Arlini, with a shudder.

Marie had seated herself on the ground, and was sobbing hysterically.

“My dear little girl,” said Sir John, “do not give way like that, you are quite safe now, you will only make yourself ill, and you distress us all very much.”

Her sister and Madame Arlini sat down by her and tried to soothe her. Beatrice had moved on to look at the horses.

“Do not go too near them,” said Captain Barrington, as one of them lashed out viciously.

“We should have come to awful grief, Barrington, had it not been for you,” said Mr Lawleigh.

“Yes, my boy,” added Sir John, “your cool head and strong arm, under God, saved us.”

Captain Barrington turned away, muttering something about there being nothing very difficult in his performance.

“We must get these poor brutes out,” he said, working away at a buckle; “one of them is badly cut—has smashed both his knees, and has a horrid gash on his off hind leg. I think the other horse must have kicked him as he got up.”

“Poor beast, how he is bleeding,” said Beatrice.

“How about getting home?” asked Horace Lawleigh; “the ladies can never walk so far. The best plan will be to send one of these fellows to the town to charter a couple of flys.”

“I will not get into a carriage again!” cried Marie excitedly. “I should die of fright!”

“Do not talk nonsense,” said Sophie. “You cannot walk home; nor do I suppose you wish to remain here.”

“Two accidents are not likely to happen in one day,” observed Sir John cheerfully.

A man had started, as suggested by Mr Lawleigh, but after an interval of a quarter of an hour an empty carriage, capable of holding two, was seen driving down the hill towards them. This was immediately engaged, and the two sisters despatched in it, accompanied by Mr Lawleigh on the box.

It was rather weary work, as Sir John declared, waiting for the promised fly. Beatrice was sympathetic over Captain

Barrington's hands, which were bleeding in one or two places.

“I have been in a good many carriage accidents,” observed Sir John, “and have to be thankful for never having been hurt in any one of them. One that happened to me many years ago, before you were born,” he added, laying his hand on Beatrice's shoulder, “I remember well. It was in the days of coaches. I had secured an inside place. My fellow travellers, I thought, were a very queer-looking set ; some were located inside and the remainder on the outside. It was a dark night, and I had begun to doze. The driver was very careless, or, as I had afterwards reason to suspect, not very sober, and he drove up against a milestone, and somehow contrived to upset the coach on one side. Fortunately nobody was hurt, and we contrived to scramble out. It seemed to me rather a marvel at the time, whether it was that we were tightly packed, or that

some of my companions were rather stout people, I know not, but so it was, no bones were broken. I was sitting rather disconsolately on a damp stone, — as a drizzling rain had been falling during the last hour,—when great was my astonishment at hearing a variety of vocal sounds around me, arising from my fellow travellers: roulades, etc., etc. It appeared that they were members of a musical company, making a tour in the small provincial towns, and were engaged to perform that night a stage further on. And as one of them observed to me, they were all anxious to ascertain whether their voices had suffered from the accident and consequent exposure to damp. He declared that it was a matter of considerable importance to them. In spite of my fatigue and depression of spirits at the uncomfortable plight I found myself in, I do not think I ever laughed more in my life.”

“ Ah ! here comes our vehicle at last,” said Allan Barrington.

“ Well, ‘ all’s well that ends well,’ so we will now depart, feeling thankful that we shall have inflicted no worse pang on our friends than keeping them waiting a little while for their dinners.”







### CHAPTER III.

**I**T was the last day of the Denzils' stay at Homburg, as they were leaving the following morning for Heidelberg. Many were the lamentations over their departure, but as Beatrice had observed, the party, under any circumstances, would have in a few more days entirely broken up, and she preferred being the one to go, rather than the one to be left behind.

Early in the morning she sallied forth for a farewell visit to the Marchesa ; much as she liked the Basileffs, she felt a greater

pang in bidding farewell to her Italian friend.

During the last four weeks, she had grown to feel a great love for Madame Arlini, her beauty captivated the young girl, and the charm of her conversation was a great delight to Beatrice.

“You are looking ill and tired to-day,” she exclaimed, on entering Madame Arlini’s room, “and I am sorry to hear you coughing so much !”

“My chest is never strong,” replied the Marchesa, smiling ; “it is a very old story. I wonder when we shall meet again, little Bee, or perhaps I ought to say, shall we never meet again ?”

“I will not think such a thing possible,” cried Beatrice gaily ; “besides, you know you have promised to pay Hubert and Conty a long visit at Denzilmere, and of course I must be one of the party.”

“Yours is such a bright, hopeful nature,

Bee, you make me feel what a wretched, faint-hearted creature I am. Sometimes I wonder why I was ever sent into the world at all, and if it were not for my children's sake, I do not think I should care how soon I left it."

"Life does seem hard to some people," replied Beatrice tenderly, and raising the Marchesa's hand to her lips; "but it was not accident, you may be certain, that has placed you where you are. Look at it in this way : Supposing a man was setting some gems, or was building a wall, some of the stones might fit into their places easily, with little trimming or work ; others, though small, might take much cutting or fitting ; consider yourself like those particular stones. Why it should be, we know not, only that in that exact place you must go. I know how easy all this is to say, and I have not a doubt I should fail dismally if I myself were tried,

but still I know it is true. Everything around us makes one feel that nothing is the result of accident; you will not be angry with me, I know, for telling you my thoughts."

"Angry! dear child, I cannot tell you how happy it makes me to hear your good and innocent thoughts; you always make me feel brighter, your words are always so full of love and tenderness. I am afraid I have an insane desire to be loved, to be made much of, and to be first with all whom I love. I have a very jealous temperament, I fear."

"That does not sound very safe," replied Beatrice; "however, it is a great thing to know one's weak points."

"You are right, and I shall content myself with thinking I have got you for a friend and counsellor. What were those words, Bee, you were quoting to me the other day?"

“‘A faithful friend is the medicine of life,’ but it is a long passage, from the Wisdom of the son of Sirach. I have it written down in a little book, in which I am in the habit of writing down any passages which strike me.”

“Then, when I come to Denzilmere, we will study them together. It is a good thing after all, Bee, to have a friend one can talk to, it prevents one getting morbid.”

“That is true,” replied Beatrice; “we are otherwise apt to look at things only from one point of view. Talking over one’s troubles is like making hay, tossing it about in the sun, instead of letting it remain in one place till it gets mildewed; and now, good-bye, till this evening; Conty is waiting for me to help her choose any number of hats.”

The last dinner-party was to consist of a larger number than usual. The

Basileffs had promised to come, also Mr Wilmington, not to the complete satisfaction of either Marie or Allan Barrington. Constance had suggested that Captain Vavasour should be invited, but the idea had been decidedly negatived by Hubert in a few strong words. His wife had taken the rebuff so quietly, that he had actually, on meeting the individual in question an hour later, himself invited him to join them.

“I hate saying good-bye,” remarked Mr Lawleigh, soon after they were seated at dinner; “it is only to pleasant things we are called upon to do so; the unpleasant ones stick fast enough to one.”

“If you feel that, Mr Lawleigh,” said Madame Arlini, in a low voice, “remember to say kind things of us when we are gone, as you will be the last of our coterie to leave Homburg.”

“That is too bad, Marchesa; you surely

do not think I could be such a brute as to say anything that was not nice of you ? ”

“ You might not perhaps go quite so far as to say nasty things of me, or of the rest of us, but you know you have often confessed you are a little fond of picking holes in weak places, and we are all of us open to you in that way. I have often heard you say that caring for people never makes you desire to spare them.”

“ You may be sure I shall never pick any holes in you, Marchesa, for I have too great a respect for you ; it would require a very strong pair of spectacles to discover your weak places ; and then again, I have a great admiration for you, and that you know is the result of approbation ; and lastly, I will confess to you, that I am rather afraid of you.”

“ You flatter me, Mr Lawleigh. Do you remember what you told me the other day Swift said : ‘ The love of flattery in most

men proceeds from the mean opinion they have of themselves ; in women, from the contrary.' I do not say that I do or do not agree with Swift ; but I am not going to let you remain under the impression that I care to be flattered."

"Flattery is very nice," observed Marie, who was listening to the conversation ; "when it is not done too clumsily, so as to hurt one's *amour propre*. Do not you agree with me, Bee?"

"No," answered Beatrice decidedly. "I should consider anybody who flattered me had a very mean opinion of my understanding."

"You need not be afraid, Miss Annesley," said Allan Barrington, who had appropriated a seat next to her ; "you are the last person who would ever invite flattery."

"The question is, What is flattery?" asked Marie. "I suppose it would depend on the opinion we have of ourselves,



whether we considered we were being flattered or not. When people say nice things to me, I always try and think I deserve them."

"Your common sense alone ought to be able to help you, I should think," answered Captain Barrington.

"I do not like the way in which you said that," cried Marie, making a little grimace. "You had an *arrière pensée* in your mind ; I believe you were doubting whether common sense was a commodity I possessed."

"What a little spitfire you are, Marie !" exclaimed Beatrice ; "you two must not quarrel on our last night."

"He aggravates me," replied Marie plaintively ; "he is always saying disagreeable things to me."

"If I have ever done so, I have given you a very false impression of my feelings, Princess," said Captain Barrington humbly.

Then, turning to Beatrice, he continued,—

“I am very glad my uncle has decided on going on to Switzerland ; for I feel quite sure we shall meet there.”

The colour deepened on his companion's cheek ; but she only replied,—

“Switzerland is rather a large place, you know.”

“My leave,” continued Allan, “is up in two months' time. I cannot tell you how hateful the thought of returning to India is to me. Now, more than ever, I shall be saying good-bye to all I care for, and be returning to a life of wretchedness.”

Beatrice started as he uttered the last words, and glanced rather timidly in his face. His whole countenance had changed ; a scowl on his brow, and his lips compressed, with an almost vindictive expression.

“Why do you speak in that way ?” she asked, after a pause ; “it was only the

other day you were telling me how much you had found to enjoy in your life in India ; how thoroughly you entered into the hunting and shooting that had come in your way."

"Yes, I did ; but I never told you I had enjoyed the last two months I spent there ; it would be strange if I had."

"You were ill ; of course, that makes a difference ; but you have every reason to hope that you will be as strong as ever when you return."

"I do not think my illness had much to do with my troubles. There are worse things in life than a sick-bed or bodily pain. No, Miss Annesley, I look back upon the last two months of my life out there with positive loathing. I found it almost unendurable then, and now, unless—unless— He cleared his throat, which had become husky with emotion, but did not continue speaking. He poured out a

glass of water hastily, and remained quite silent.

Beatrice made no attempt at resuming the conversation. Why he should speak in such a bitter way was a mystery to her. She had often noticed that fits of depression and silence would occasionally come over him ; but they were of brief duration, and he would return to the merry, light-hearted manner habitual to him.

After a silence of a few minutes, he said, in a low voice,—

“I am wrong, perhaps, to speak as I have done ; but if you knew all I feel and suffer, you would perhaps pity me. All troubles are hard to bear, but perhaps none more so than those we feel we have, by weakness or folly, brought down on our own heads.”

“In that case I do not feel sure that I could honestly say I pitied you,” she began, but he interrupted her quickly,—

“For Heaven’s sake, do not judge me hastily! mine is a case in which you must know all, or your judgment would be unfair.”

A deep flush rose to his brow, and he turned his head away from the dark eyes scanning his countenance too closely.

A discussion was going on among the rest of the party as to whether they should make a last appearance in the dancing-saloon that evening. All were in favour of so doing, except Sir John and Hubert.

“What should an old fellow like me do among a lot of frisky young people, my dear young lady?” he answered Marie, who was trying to induce him to dance a quadrille with her.

Hubert argued that they had to start early the next day, and he thought both Constance and Beatrice had better go home early. His wife expressed a strong wish to go to the dancing, but, contrary to

her usual practice, she appeared to be willing to defer to his opinion ; and the result was that Hubert was so overcome by her unwonted submission, that he agreed to her joining the dancers—only extracting a promise from her that she would not stay very late or overtire herself.

Sir John suggested that he and Hubert should go and spend the evening with the Princess Basileff, where, he observed, “we shall enjoy ourselves more than in the company of all these lunatics. We shall, at any rate, get peace, quiet, a room as cool as the state of the weather will permit, agreeable conversation, and excellent Russian tea.”

“And, last of all,” added the Princess Sophie, “a very warm welcome.”

“I am glad we shall go to the dancing to-night,” said Allan, turning to Beatrice ; “it is an unexpected pleasure, and one that will live in my memory, having one

more last waltz with you ;” and he bent on her a look of mingled sadness and tenderness.

“Do you know, Captain Barrington, I think you are very depressing to - night ; had you not better drink some more champagne ? Marie says it has prevented her from feeling doleful to - night ; it might have a like effect on you.”

“They have nothing to feel sad about, judging by the noise they are all making ; and you, are you so very cheerful ?—have you no regret that our pleasant time here has come to an end ?”

“I have enjoyed being here very much ;—I may say I hardly remember ever spending such a happy time, but I cannot say I feel particularly sad. There are still a great many pleasant things to look forward to. I think I will wait to feel melancholy till I have something to justify my being so.”

Later on, when they were all assembled in the dancing-saloon, Mr Wilmington went up to Beatrice, who was standing beside Madame Arlini, and said,—

“Are you going to dance this waltz? If not, may I have the pleasure of being your partner?”

“I have promised to dance it with Captain Barrington,” she replied; “but if you will ask me for the next, I shall say yes, with pleasure.”

“I will try and be patient,” he answered, smiling.

“I have not come here to sit still!” cried Marie, rushing up at that moment. “Nobody will ask me to dance, and Sophie says I am not to dance with that tall man with black hair. He is an Italian count, and he dances beautifully; but she has decided that we are not to know him, and has forbidden me to speak to him. But I say that I do not care what a man



is when I am at a ball ; all I expect from him then is that he should dance well."

"Your sister is quite right," observed Mr Wilmington ; "he is a most objectionable individual,—not to speak in stronger terms. Suppose, Princess, as you have nobody else to dance with, you put up with me ?"

"Can you dance ?—are you quite sure ?" asked Marie, with a look of comical impertinence, her eyes brimming over with fun. "Dancing, you know, is not an intellectual pastime, or I should not venture to doubt your capacity."

"Suppose you try me," he replied, good-humouredly.

"Come along then !" cried Marie, linking her arm in his. "You are so tall that I can hardly reach up to your shoulder. My feet will not keep still since the music has begun."

“That was a dance I shall not soon forget,” observed Allan Barrington to his partner. “Let us dance the next ; it may be a long time, if ever, before we shall have such another ;” and he pressed the hand leaning on his arm.

“I have promised the next waltz to Mr Wilmington. Why should I not have done so ?” she asked, with surprise, as he stopped suddenly on his way through the room, as if taken aback at her words.

“Of course you are at liberty to do so,” he replied, hotly ; “but I did think you would have given me the two first.”

“At dinner I thought you were depressed and out of spirits, but now I begin to think I was mistaken, Captain Barrington, and that you are rather in a bad temper this evening.”

“I am childish enough not to like being disappointed,” he replied, more gently. “I fancied you would have done more for an

old friend than for a new one. You have only known Wilmington for a week."

"I was not aware that accepting an invitation to dance ought to be regulated by the length of one's acquaintance. Is that one of the rules laid down in the book of etiquette?"

When Beatrice rejoined Madame Arlini, she asked the latter what had become of her sister.

"She complained of the heat of the room after dancing," replied the Marchesa, "and she has gone into the garden, I believe. I hope she will not catch cold."

Beatrice had noticed that her sister had been dancing with Captain Vavasour, and she watched anxiously for her re-appearance.

After a time Lady Denzil returned, and when petitioned by the Marchese and Mr Lawleigh for a dance, excused herself on

the ground of being engaged to Captain Vavasour.

The Marchese bowed low, and, with a cynical smile, murmured something in a low voice to Mr Lawleigh, who only laughed.

Beatrice felt her cheeks growing crimson with annoyance. She felt sure that Constance's conduct was drawing forth impertinent and unpleasant remarks. How could her sister be so foolish, so wrong, towards Hubert, and degrade her own dignity as his wife?

She drew near, and warned her that she was laying herself open to criticism by allowing Captain Vavasour to engage her attention so exclusively; but Constance only shrugged her shoulders.

"What is the time, dear Marchesa?" asked Beatrice, a little later on.

"Half-past eleven; time to be going home, I think."

“Quite late enough,” replied Beatrice, all of whose enjoyment in the dance had vanished. “I will tell Conty, so will you wait for us a moment and we will walk home together? Captain Barrington promised Hubert that he would see us safely home.”

Lady Denzil made no objection to leaving, and the rest of the party determined to follow their example, Captain Vavasour insisting on escorting Constance and her sister.

“Good-night, Lady Denzil, it is not good-bye, as we shall all meet at the station and see the last of you,” he cried, as he left them at the door of their apartment.





## CHAPTER IV.

“**D**O you know what the practice of presenting one’s friends on their departure from Hamburg with bouquets is called?” asked Mr Lawleigh, as he advanced to meet Constance and her sister when they arrived at the station the following morning.

“No,” replied the former. “Does it rejoice in any special name?”

“It is called *bunching* people. I have an idea the word has been borrowed from our cousins on the other side of the Atlantic; and allow me,” he added, with

a bow, "to be the first to *bunch* you both."

"What lovely flowers!" the two sisters simultaneously cried.

"You will have a carriage full before you leave. I see your courier has secured your compartment, and has been engaged for the last half-hour in stowing away any number of impedimenta in the shape of bags, dressing-cases, and wraps of all sorts. How uncomfortable most of these comforts make one; and you never, as a rule, have the right thing at hand when you want it."

"Our luggage is a sight to behold, in all truth," replied Hubert. "As to Conty's dress box, I believe she could lie down full length in it."

"Here come Sir John and Allan Barrington," said Horace Lawleigh; "and oh, my goodness, what bouquets!"

As Allan presented his to Beatrice, he

observed, "They are all deep-red rose-buds and heliotrope."

"Yes, I think I should have had the discrimination to know that," she replied, laughing. "I have a slight knowledge of botany."

"But not enough knowledge on the subject to know why I chose those particular flowers, I venture to guess. Have you ever studied a little book called *The Language of Flowers?*"

"No, I cannot say I ever have, and what is more, I never even heard of its existence till this minute."

"Well, whenever you do come across it, you will be able to understand my reason for selecting those flowers."

"Here come some more stragglers to say good-bye," observed Mr Lawleigh.

Constance had seated herself in the railway compartment, while Beatrice remained standing on the platform with Hubert.



“What shall we do with such a mass of flowers?” she cried. “We shall want a special porter and a truck for them alone.”

Captain Vavasour arrived the last, carrying an enormous bouquet with C. D. entwined on it in tuberoses, and he advanced to the door of the carriage to present his offering and make his adieux.

“What a lovely Maréchal Niel bud you have in your dress,” he observed. “Among such masses of flowers you will never miss that one, I am sure; cannot you spare it to a poor fellow?” he asked, fixing his blue eyes audaciously on Constance’s face.

“Do you want it?” she replied, carelessly.

“I should like something to help me to keep up my spirits when you have vanished; I will not say to remind me of you, for that, unfortunately, is not necessary.”

Slowly Constance unpinned the rose, but instead of placing it in the hand out-

stretched to receive it, she dropped it quietly on to the ground at his feet."

"Well! I never saw a favour more grudgingly bestowed!" he exclaimed, as he stooped to pick up the flower.

"I presume you do not care for the pin which fastened it?" she asked, with a coquettish smile.

"Certainly; even a black glass-headed pin worn by you has its value in my eyes."

"Time's up," called out Mr Lawleigh, "so you must get all your kissing done as soon as possible."

"Write to us from Heidelberg!" cried Marie.

"Remember you have all promised to come and stay with us at Denzilmere," said Constance.

The Marchesa folded Beatrice in her arms, kissing her tenderly. "Good-bye little blessing," she murmured.

One more fervent pressure of the hand

from Allan, and she sprang lightly into the carriage, and they steamed away out of the station among a chorus of farewells.

“How lovely all our flowers are!” exclaimed Beatrice, as she proceeded to place them in some sort of order. “And what a charming idea it was of the Basileffs to bring us this lovely basket of fruit instead of flowers. Do you see, Conty, on the ribbon round the handle there is *souvenir* on one side, and *bon voyage* on the other. By - the - bye, Hubert, what is meant by the language of flowers? Is there not some book written on the subject?”

“Oh, yes, have you never read it? I hope, Bee, you do not intend going in for that sort of sentimental, trashy stuff.”

“Oh, dear no! it is not at all in my line.”

All the same, in her inmost heart, Beatrice resolved to apply her mind on the first opportunity offered to her, to discover

what was the meaning intended to be conveyed by red roses and heliotrope.

In spite of the heat, they accomplished their journey pleasantly. Constance was in an amiable frame of mind, and Hubert in good spirits.

During the two days spent at Heidelberg, they found much to interest and amuse them. Beatrice devoted herself almost entirely to sketching, and it was with a feeling of considerable regret that she turned her back on the old town and its many beauties.

A few days later saw them established at Interlachen. Hour after hour Beatrice would sit watching the beauty of the mountains, the ever-varying tints, the wonderful sunsets. She studied Murray's guide-book with Hubert, settling what expeditions they should make. But how often "*l'homme propose, et Dieu dispose!*" All the carefully settled plans fell to the ground.

Two days after their arrival, Beatrice was

in her bedroom unpacking some drawing materials, when she was startled by the sudden entrance of her sister, who was looking deadly pale, her eyes unnaturally distended, and a look of horror written in them.

“What is the matter, Conty?” she cried.

“Read. I cannot tell you. It is too dreadful,” replied her sister, with a sob; and she dropped on to the sofa as if unable to stand, and covering her face with her hands, rocked herself backwards and forwards. Beatrice took the sheet of the *Times* newspaper, which her sister had thrust into her hands. It was the first sheet, containing the Births, Marriages and Deaths. Her instinct told her that in the last she should find the explanation she sought. At the very end she read the words, “On the 18th inst., of fever, at Muttra, Guy Goring, Capt. 17th Regt., aged 29.”

Over and over again she read the words, as if fascinated by them.

“ Poor Guy,” she murmured at last ; “ and he was so young, so good, so true ! Oh ! what will his mother do ? Conty, it is too terrible.”

No answer came, and looking up, Beatrice saw that Conty was lying back quite insensible. She knelt by her sister's side, and began chafing her hands, and wondered what she ought to do. Her first impulse was to call Hubert ; but she reflected that she hardly knew how she should account for his wife's sudden illness. She felt utterly bewildered. Then she rose from her knees, and fetching some water bathed her sister's temples, and deluging her handkerchief with eau de Cologne, applied it to her nostrils. After some minutes, which had appeared an eternity to the frightened girl, Constance opened her eyes and gazed around her with a stupefied air.

“ What is it ? ” she asked, feebly. “ What is the matter ? Why are you crying, Bee ?

Oh ! I remember now. Guy is dead !” and her tears burst forth afresh.

“Darling, you must try and be calm, or you will make yourself ill again.”

“I cannot, I cannot ; I feel as if my heart would break. I wish I were dead too. Oh ! Guy, Guy, why did I ever leave you ? I have never loved anybody but him, and I have killed him, Bee ; he would never have gone to India but for me. He is gone now for ever, and has never said he forgave me. He told me I should be punished for my sin,—those were his very words, and they have haunted me ever since. And how true they were. He would have been sorry if he could only know how wretched I am sometimes. He said I had taken all the joy out of his life, and now he is gone for ever.”

“You must try and be quiet, Conty, darling.”

“I feel mad, Bee. How can I bear the

horror of going on living as I am doing ? My whole life is a lie from beginning to end. It is not my fault, I cannot love Hubert ; and I have spoilt his life too. I shall end in making his life a curse and a misery to him, as I have made my own to myself. Lock the door," she continued, excitedly, "lest Hubert should come in. Oh ! how I wish I could leave him and never see him again !"

"Conty you are mad to talk in that way, it is really wicked ; try, darling sister, to think over all this quietly. There is no doubt that you have done very wrong in many ways ; wrong to have given Guy up when you loved him ; wrong to have married Hubert, as you could not love him ; but you must remember now that you cannot undo the past ; do not, therefore, add to the wrong already done. Having become Hubert's wife, it will be a great sin not to try and do all you can to make him happy,



and atone, as far as lies in your power, for the injury you have done him. Try and feel you are being punished for your sin. I am sure it was what Guy himself would have told you ; and then, last of all, dear, you must try and put the memory of poor Guy away from you."

"I shall never be able to do it, it is too hard."

"No it is not. Nothing is too hard that is clearly our duty to do ; of course, you will feel very sad at first, perhaps even for a long time, but the very knowledge that you are trying will help you, and you will be happy some day yet."

"Never," replied Conty passionately. "I shall never be happy again. I shall always see Guy dying all alone before my eyes—dying away from every one he loved."

"Time makes everything less difficult to bear, and there is no other course left to you, Conty, darling."

“He never answered my last letter. I suppose he was too angry.”

“Who do you mean?—Guy? Did you write to him? What made you do that, Conty?”

“I felt so wretched that I could not help writing to him; I begged him to write and tell me that he forgave me. I told him I had already found out my mistake; I cannot tell you how I longed to hear from him.”

“Oh! Conty, how could you? And so soon after you were married too.”

“Yes, I daresay I was wrong. I felt sure you would say so, which is one reason why I never told you that I had done so.”

“Lie down now on my bed, Conty, or you will be quite ill; and then Hubert will be wretched.”

“Bee, I wish he would only leave me alone with you; if he would go away for some time, I might have a chance of feeling

more kindly towards him, more as I ought. I cannot go on talking and looking as usual when I feel my heart is breaking. Cannot you ask him ?”

“I ask him ?” cried Beatrice, aghast at the bare suggestion ; “I could not possibly do that. Of course you have told him that you were to have married Guy ?”

“No, I have never mentioned Guy’s name to him.”

“Dear Conty, how wrong of you ; you ought to have told him all about Guy and yourself. Had you done so, it would make things easier now, and, to a certain extent, he could have sympathised with you.”

“You will tell him ?” Constance again asked, imploringly.

“Cannot you see that it is from you alone he ought to hear of it ?” replied her sister.

“No, I do not agree with you ; he would be so bitterly angry with me, he cannot be

angry with you. If you really love me, Bee, you will tell him all."

Beatrice remained silent ; the more she thought over it, the more impossible it seemed to her to comply with her sister's wishes. She shrank with a feeling of horror from having to tell the whole story to Hubert, from witnessing the pain which she knew he would suffer ; how could she justify her sister's conduct, for, in her eyes, it was both mean and cowardly. And then, how he loved this wife of his ! Tell it in what words she might, the fact still remained — Constance had married him, not only without love for the man she married, but with her whole heart given to another. Still Hubert must be told, and, unless she could summon up courage, and be the one to tell him, might not the first burst of wounded feeling on his part help to widen the breach which for the present was inevitable between him and his wife. If she could in any way help to bring

about a happier state of feeling between them later, was it not a clear duty she had to perform, and one in which she had no right to let any personal feeling influence her.

“Bee, do not sit there for ever,” cried Constance, in a tone of despair; “only promise to tell Hubert. I am sure you would do so, if you only knew how utterly miserable I am, and how afraid of him I am. If you will not, I declare to you solemnly that I will go away myself, for I could not lead the same life day after day, feeling as I do now; it would kill me.”

“I will do so if you wish it,” replied Beatrice at last, speaking slowly, and as if the words choked her; “but, Conty, you do not do Hubert justice. I do not say he is perfect, he would not be half so lovable if he were, but he is very generous and large hearted, and I feel quite sure that if he once realised that you were truly sorry for having

wronged him, and were anxious to devote your life to do all in your power to make him happy—”

“But I am not,” interrupted Constance vehemently. “I feel sure that it will be impossible for me ever to love Hubert.”

“You cannot be certain of that,” replied her sister; “his constant thought for you, his unselfishness and devotion, must touch your heart sooner or later.”

“Please go to him, Bee, for I am in such a state of dread lest he should come here.”

Poor Beatrice rose from the chair she had taken near the window, and without another word went out of the room. Her heart beat violently, and she felt very much inclined to cry, but checked the desire, and, with a silent prayer for help, went to find Hubert. He was sitting reading, and on her entrance looked up and asked rather impatiently for Conty. Beatrice saw he was flushed, which, with him, was always a sign of annoyance.

She looked at his delicate, almost boyish face, the large, tender, speaking eyes, the sensitive and beautifully-cut lips, and a great sorrow rose up in her heart as she thought of the exceeding pain she was about to inflict upon him.

“Where is Conty?” he again asked; “she left the room some time ago, without saying a word to me, though she knew I was waiting for her to go out with me. But I suppose she has changed her mind, and will not come; she never cares to do anything I ask her. I believe she would rather be with anybody than with me,” he added, bitterly.

“Hubert,” began Beatrice, in a trembling voice, which she strove hard to steady, “Conty is not well this morning.”

“Not well!” he cried, starting from his seat. “Where is she? What is the matter with her? I must go and see her.”

“Please stay here, for I want to talk to

you. Conty is lying down now, and wishes to be alone for a little while."

"And did she send you here to tell me this?" asked Hubert, his face growing crimson.

"Listen to me, please, dear Hubert, and try to be as patient as you can."

"It is very easy to talk of patience. Do you take into consideration what I must feel when I see how she hates my being with her, that she even sends you to tell me to stay away?"

"Conty is not exactly ill, Hubert, but she is very much upset and very unhappy."

"Why should she be unhappy? And if she is, does she not know that nobody cares for her as I do, and that there is nothing on earth I would not do for her?"

"Sit down, please," Beatrice urged again, "for I want to have a long talk with you."



It is very hard to have to do it," she added, with a sob, and a tear started to her eye, which she brushed quickly away.

Hubert had grown quite pale as he watched her nervous manner, and a dread of something, he knew not what, stole over him.

"You must try and be brave as well as patient, Hubert, because what I am going to say will, I know, give you great pain; and do, please, try and see with my eyes, and hope for the best. Conty has to-day seen in the paper the death of a great friend—the greatest friend she ever had," continued Beatrice, in a faltering voice.

"What friend should she have of whom she cannot speak to me?" he asked, fiercely.

"Conty was very wrong, Hubert, in not having told you that before she knew you she was engaged to be married to

Guy Goring. She loved him very much, and he has died of fever in India."

"If she loved him, why did she not marry him?"

"She broke off her engagement with poor Guy, because he had no fortune to speak of, and Conty knew she was not fitted to be the wife of a poor man."

"When did she break off her engagement with Goring?" asked Hubert, in a hard voice,— "before she knew me or afterwards?"

"It was when we were staying at the seaside last October—just before we returned to London," answered Beatrice, with a guilty look.

"Exactly," observed Hubert bitterly. "I am glad you have the sense to speak the truth; and so I am to understand that soon after that date Conty promised to marry me, because I was able to give her the money and position, neither of

which the man she really loved was the possessor of? Poor Goring! I could wish I shared his fate at this moment, though he is dead and gone; he, at any rate, was saved from the degradation which has fallen on me. You do not answer," he continued, as he fixed his eyes, bright with passion, on the trembling girl. "I am glad you have the grace not to tell a lie, as I said before; for it would be useless—I should not believe you. And Conty, having all along loved Goring, and having married me, has sent you to tell me this? It is well done, and in keeping with her falseness and cowardice. I will never forgive her—never! I will leave her at once and for ever!"

"But, Hubert, you love her! Remember that Conty is still so young, she has been badly brought up, she is naturally weak and easily led. Only be kind, be merciful to her now, and I feel certain

she will grow to love and to cling to you, —and more than ever, because she will feel your goodness and your generosity at a time when you might have crushed her.”

“How could I ever trust her again? She married me with a lie upon her lips.”

“Forgive me, Hubert. I do not excuse Conty’s conduct, for I think she has acted very wrongly in concealing the whole truth from you; but I still think you are somewhat unjust to her. Conty never pretended to love you; she even went so far as to tell you that she did not love you as she ought to do; yet, after that, you were willing and contented to marry her; you even implored her to do so.”

“I do not deny that, but I never imagined for one moment I was marrying a woman who was in love with another man. My infatuation would never have carried me to that length. You are hardly more than a

child, Bee, and you cannot understand what a man feels when he is deceived by a woman he loves. Good God ! and how I do love her ! ”

Hubert threw his arms down on the table beside him, and buried his face in his hands.

“ Listen, then, to what I am going to say, dear Hubert,” and Beatrice hastily brushed away her tears, which were falling fast. “ I do not say immediately ; perhaps not very soon ; but in time, if you will only be patient, your own good noble self, Conty will grow to feel quite differently about you. She is very wretched now, not only because she loved Guy, I mean she used to love him formerly,” added Beatrice, as she saw Hubert wince at her words, “ but because she feels how very badly she has behaved towards you, as well as to him, and, now that he is gone, her conscience reproaches her bitterly.”

“What do you want me to do, Bee?” asked Hubert, raising his head, and gazing at Beatrice with a dull, hopeless expression; “do not ask me to do impossible things; I feel as if I could never be happy again.”

“Only to be patient and forbearing towards her; it is a certain way of gaining her love; it cannot fail.”

“But in what way can I show my love for her more than I have ever done? She is my one thought day and night.”

“The only thing I can suggest is what will, I am afraid, pain you; but if you think it well over, you will, I am sure, see that it would be wise. I mean that you should make up your mind to go away for some time, and leave her here with me; it would do more good than anything. When you are no longer with her she will learn what she has lost. She will miss your constant devotion. I quite understand that it will be very painful to you; but you will

never regret having made the sacrifice when you see the good that will come out of it. Besides, even if you do remain, as you are now feeling, and as she feels, you would scarcely be happy near her. Say that you have business in England, and that, as your plans are uncertain, Conty and I are to remain here for the present. The servants won't think that there is anything strange in your doing so, nor, for that matter, will anybody else. I will do all I can to help you, be very sure. I will write to you as often as you like, I will take every care of her, and she shall be as safe as if you were here. I am sure she will miss you very much, and I shall try and manage that she shall do so."

Hubert remained silent for some minutes, and when at last he spoke, his voice was husky from emotion.

"It is very hard, Bee, how hard I cannot tell you, to go away and leave her for so

long a time ;—besides, how do I know it will do any good ? ”

“ It is the only chance that I can see,” she replied. “ Your presence here would be painful to both of you. She can hardly be blind to the great sacrifice you are making for her, and Conty, with all her faults, is not ungrateful. And you should always remember, when you judge her for wishing to marry a man with money, all she went through at home, hearing of nothing but troubles and worries about money ; everything was made wretched to her by it.”

“ Why should it have been worse for her than for you ? Would you have given up a man you loved, and had promised to marry, because he was poor ? I do not believe you would have done so.”

“ Conty has had a great deal more to bear than I have ; she was at home and a witness of all the miserable quarrels between my father and Mrs Annesley, and



consequently grew to have a dread of poverty in a way that she might not otherwise have done. I was at school during three years."

"No, Constance is certainly not cut out for a poor man's wife."

"Try and think as kindly as you can of her. I feel so sure that everything will come right some day, and that you will end in being really happy. I pray God I may be right."

"You are a dear, good little sister ; and, hard as it is, I will try and do what you ask me, only you must promise not to leave Conty alone ; for she is very young and beautiful. I know you are a year younger than she is ; but many would take you for the eldest."

"Oh, yes, Constance's beauty would always attract attention, and you may depend upon me that I will always be with her, and guard her jealously."

“You are the kindest and truest-hearted girl I ever met, Bee! I could not love you better if you were my own sister,” replied Hubert, kissing her. “And you will do all you can for me; you will talk to her about me constantly, will you not?” he asked, anxiously.

“Never fear, and I will pray, oh! so earnestly, that all may come right; and I firmly believe it will,” she replied, more cheerfully.

For some little time longer they sat and talked over what Hubert was to do, and what directions he should leave with his courier, and where he should go on first arriving in England. They decided that he should not make known his return to Colonel Annesley, thus avoiding explanations in that quarter.

Constance did not appear during the rest of the day, and, by her desire, Beatrice slept in her room. Lord Denzil told his courier

that he found he should be obliged to return to England on the following day, but that his stay there was very uncertain, and that till he knew his movements more certainly, Lady Denzil had decided upon remaining at Interlachen with Miss Annesley. Should she get tired of the place before his return, she would move on somewhere else. He gave the most minute directions so that her comfort might be in every way ensured, and that no trouble or inconvenience might fall on her.





## CHAPTER V.

**B**EFORE starting on the following morning, Hubert went to his wife's room to say good-bye to her. Constance was not up. She threw her arms round his neck for the first time in her life, and, bursting into tears, thanked him for his kindness and consideration for her. She asked him to try and forgive her; and raising his hand to her lips, kissed it tenderly. The tears stood in his eyes, and he seemed unable to speak; but pressing his lips on the golden-brown head, he turned hastily away, and was soon on his way to the station, accompanied by Beatrice, who was resolved to see him off.

During the first few days after Hubert's departure, his name was scarcely mentioned between the two sisters, nor did they speak much of Guy Goring. On the third day, Beatrice received a letter from Hubert. "Private" was written on the first page ; and she immediately put it into her pocket, unseen by Constance, who was engaged in her own correspondence. When she was alone she read the letter. Hubert, of course, told her how miserable he felt, how he missed the sight of the face he loved so well, but that, if ultimately he could only hope to win her love, he felt no sacrifice would be too great. He went on to tell her how he had stopped at Berne, where he knew he should find Sir John Hardcastle, and that he had resolved to tell him unreservedly all his troubles.

"I have known him," he wrote, "from my childhood, and there is nobody whose opinion I value more highly ; and I know

what a true, steadfast friend he is. He at once offered to go to Interlachen, and to remain there with you both. I need not tell you what comfort his doing so gives me, and I am sure that you will feel the same. Allan Barrington—dear old fellow!—is with him ; you may expect to see them at any moment after you receive this. Dear little Bee, do all you can for me, though I know it is unnecessary for me to ask you this. I cannot tell you how I am looking forward to your first letter. Mind you tell me everything about my darling. I go straight to England from here. What a different home-coming to the one I had looked forward to !”

A feeling of great comfort stole into the girl's heart at the thought of so soon meeting Sir John, to whom she had grown much attached during her stay at Homburg. She was delighted to think that he knew everything as to the relations at present

existing between Hubert and his wife, for he was so wise and kind, that his help would be invaluable in bringing them again together. And then her thoughts flew to Allan Barrington, and she was almost startled at the strange joy she was conscious of feeling as she realised that in a very few days she should again see him. She hardly cared to acknowledge to herself how constantly he was in her thoughts,—how often she found herself thinking over some conversation they had had together, or of some trifling incident connected with him. Gradually, how she was at loss to explain, it had dawned upon her that Captain Barrington cared for her, to what degree she knew not, but she felt that there was a marked difference in his manner to her and to the others. As to her own feelings towards him, she had, up to the present time, resolutely avoided analysing them. However, not one word of her satisfac-

tion could she communicate to her sister, as she did not wish her to know of the letter she had received from Hubert.

They were not a very lively pair, as Beatrice observed. Constance seemed really ill; she spoke but little of herself, but at night Beatrice would awake and hear the sobs coming from her sister's room, the door of which opened into hers. Many a time, as she saw the tears welling into her sister's eyes, her tender heart would ache in silent sympathy, and she contented herself with showing the sufferer every little care and attention her loving thoughts could suggest. They drove out daily, but Conty refused to make any distant excursions. She declared she had no inclination to see anything. She would sit by Beatrice's side while the latter sketched, and though she held a book in her hand, scarcely ever looked at it, but would watch the distant



mountains, with a sad, far-away look in her eyes.

Two days after the receipt of Hubert's letter, Sir John made his appearance. Constance was not in the room. The kind eyes and bright, cheery smile seemed to shed a ray of warmth and sunshine on poor Beatrice, and she welcomed him warmly.

"I am so glad to see you, Sir John—oh! so much more than I can tell you."

He patted her shoulder gently, and said,—

"My dear little girl, I am very glad indeed to be here. As you know, that poor boy told me all his troubles, and later on we must have a talk over them. We must see what we can do for these young people. Your advice was very good, and shows what a sharp little woman you are,—not at all bad for a child of eighteen."

"Oh! Sir John, I am beginning to feel quite old."

“Does your sister expect me?”

“I have said nothing to her, as I could not tell her the contents of Hubert's letter.”

Constance at this moment entered the room, and expressed her surprise and pleasure at seeing Sir John.

“I had no idea you were here. When did you arrive, and is Captain Barrington with you?” she asked.

“We both arrived only an hour ago,” he replied, “and are in your hotel, which, I think, is the best one here. I saw your husband at Berne, to my great surprise, and he told me he was obliged to go home on business, and seemed very hazy as to how soon he should be able to return here. He said he had left you and your sister alone, which struck me as being rather a rash proceeding, so I told him I should consider it my duty to come and look after you, and see you did not get into any mischief. So now, Miss Bee, I warn you that you had

better be on your best behaviour. What a lovely place this is !” he continued, walking to the window. “And now tell me what have you been doing with yourselves? I cannot say you are looking particularly blooming, Lady Denzil ; you must get back some of your roses before your husband returns, and there is nothing more likely to help you in so doing than plenty of fresh air. I propose that we make several expeditions, and see all we can of the country, now the weather is so fine. What have you seen ?”

“Nothing, as yet,” replied Constance. “I have not been feeling well since Hubert left us.”

“That will not do at all. There are some beautiful drives. What say you, if to-morrow is fine, to going to Lauterbrunnen ? it is a lovely valley, with a water-fall towards one end. It will take the whole day ; and if you wish to go to

Grindelwald, and up as far as the glacier, you must settle to sleep there."

"I would rather come back here, I do not care for the glacier," replied Lady Denzil.

"And what does your sister say?" asked Sir John, turning to Beatrice; "she is an important member of our party."

Beatrice of course protested that she was quite willing to forego inspecting the glacier.

"Well, shall we settle to start if fine to-morrow, at ten o'clock?"

But Lady Denzil declared she would prefer putting it off till the day after. Sir John then suggested they should settle to dine in the table-d'hôte room at a separate table; both sisters expressed their pleasure at the arrangement, and Sir John left them soon after, promising to look them up after luncheon.

When the little party met again, Allan

Barrington imparted his delight to Beatrice at meeting her again, in terms which made her heart beat, and during the whole of dinner he kept up a lively flow of conversation with her, and after they had sat a while in the gardens of the hotel over their coffee, he persuaded her to leave her sister with Sir John, and take a stroll in the town with him. That night, when Beatrice betook herself to bed, somehow she felt that the world had grown brighter than it had seemed to her during several days.

The next morning was a dull one, with a feeling of thunder in the air, and Constance seemed more than usually depressed; she had slept badly, and was looking, her sister thought, ill and worn.

“Here come the letters and the newspapers, Conty; so there will be something to amuse you!” she cried, as the courier entered with rather a large budget.

Constance looked up anxiously to see

whether there was a letter for her from Hubert. She was secretly rather vexed at his not having written to her once since his departure.

“There are only two letters for you, Conty,” observed Beatrice; “one from Lady Clementina, and the other from papa,—there are none for me.”

“You can read papa’s, I want to see what Clem has to say.”

A low cry from her sister caused her to look up suddenly.

“What is it?” she asked; “anything wrong, Bee?”

“There is a letter enclosed for you, and oh! my darling, it is from *him*, from poor Guy, I mean,” and she held the letter towards Conty, with a trembling hand.

“I cannot read it, Bee,” replied her sister, shrinking back, “it is too dreadful to think of receiving a letter from him, when I know he is dead.”

Beatrice looked at the post-mark, and observed,—

“The letter must have reached London long ago ; I wonder why papa never forwarded it sooner. Yes, I see,” she continued, glancing over her father’s letter, “he says he has been out of town, and that Mrs Annesley declared she did not know our address ; how stupid of her. Conty, dear, you must read his letter, it may be a comfort to you,” and so saying, she left the room. When she returned after a short absence, she found Constance, her head buried in the sofa cushions, sobbing bitterly.

“Read what he says, Bee, there is nothing you ought not to see in the letter. Oh ! how much better he was than I am.”

The letter was an answer to the one written by Constance. He told her she

had no need to ask for his forgiveness, that she had long ago received it. He blamed her education and early training in great part as the cause of her acting as she had done towards him. For a time she had made him not only miserable, but what was far worse, reckless and wicked, and he knew that he had well nigh broken his mother's heart. He bitterly repented his past conduct. Since his arrival in India, he had already suffered from three attacks of fever, and he had a presentiment that his life was not destined to be a long one. He had that morning buried two of his men, after only a few hours' illness. Her letter, he went on to say, had greatly pained him, as he could not but grieve that she was unhappy, but he urged her to remember that she had voluntarily chosen her present lot, and he entreated her earnestly not to destroy another man's happiness as she had destroyed his. He



had suffered, himself, so intensely, that he would do all in his power to prevent such misery falling on the head of any other man as innocent as himself. It was in her power to make any man happy, especially one who worshipped her as he had heard Hubert did, and he implored her not to throw away the happiness of her life by indulging in vain regrets. He did not deny that he still suffered, but he had firmly resolved to put her out of his heart, as in this world she could never be aught to him but the wife of a friend for whom he had a great respect. If it were ordained that he should ever meet her again, he prayed that he might do so with a clear conscience.

Finally, he again asked her, if she wished in any way to soften his grief and pain, to entirely put away from her the memory of the past, and to let him feel that his

friend had been at least spared as sad a fate as his own.

“He had ceased to care for me, or he would never have written that letter,” said Conty, as her tears fell fast.

“How can you say so? Why, his whole letter is full of goodness and tenderness, the better and higher sort of love I mean. Prove yourself worthy of his friendship, for *that* you had, to the last hour of his life. Guy would never have gone on caring for a woman who fell short of what he considered a woman should be.”

“Think of what a love I threw away,” moaned Constance.

“Yes, but that is gone and past now ; does he not tell you that himself? And, dear Conty—do not be angry,—but one of your peculiarities is, that nothing appears to you so precious as that which is beyond your reach. What you should try and remember now is, that in this letter Guy gives you a

sort of dying charge ; he tells you to make your husband happy, to be careful not to ruin by your own conduct the happiness of two lives ; this ought to be a help to you."

" I will try," said Constance, in a broken voice. " I wonder whether those who are dead and gone can ever see our efforts here on earth to do right ? But I shall never forget that it is all my fault, and that if it had not been for me, Guy would not have died."

" How I feel for his poor mother. I only wish I dared write to her ; the thought of her sorrow haunts me," said Beatrice.

" How she must hate me, Bee."

" But, Conty, you will resolve from this hour to strive to lead another life, to be a different woman in many ways, to try and follow Guy's advice,—his earnest wish ; and to think how much you have to be thankful for. I do not think you need fear that it will be hard to repair the wrong you did

Hubert ; try not to be a drag on him, take an interest in his pursuits. You know how his heart is set on improving his property, and repairing the neglect from which he thinks the people about have suffered. Think how precious your sympathy will be to him. If you will only believe me, there is so much happiness in store for you yet.

“ I will try,” said Constance humbly. “ And Bee, darling, I shall never, as long as I live, forget what a help and comfort you have been to me. What should I have done without you ? ”

“ Well, if you love me, you will now do what I ask you, which is to lie down here quietly and try and sleep, you had such a bad night.”

“ I dread going to sleep, for I have such horrible dreams. I am always seeing Guy before my eyes, and I hear his last words,— ‘ I will never forgive you.’ ”

“But, Conty, they were not his last words ; what they were, you have read to-day ; put, therefore, away from you all the past, and only remember that he freely forgave you.”

And stooping over her sister, Beatrice kissed her gently, and placing her pillows more comfortably, left the room.





## CHAPTER VI.

**T**HE next morning being fine, the small party started on their expedition to Lauterbrunnen. They were delighted with the beauty of the drive, and of the rushing Lutschine foaming over the huge boulders. Beatrice was never weary of calling the attention of her companions to any picturesque and striking view, and pointing out the tiny châteaux perched high up on the mountain side. Sir John was in great spirits, and told them amusing stories, and was ever ready to answer Beatrice's numerous questions.

Allan Barrington seemed very happy sit-

ting beside the younger sister, chaffing her continually about her enthusiasm. The only member of the party who showed no animation was Lady Denzil ; she made occasional attempts at being cheerful, as if she were aware of her own shortcomings on that score ; still she looked sad and out of spirits. When they reached the inn at Lauterbrunnen, they found the yard crowded with vehicles of every description, tourists of all ages and both sexes, attired in the most wonderful costumes ; some armed with alpenstocks, others with botanical tins slung across their shoulders.

“ I bet you anything you like,” whispered Captain Barrington to Beatrice, “ that the extraordinary specimens of humanity before us are a lot of tourists ‘ personally conducted ’ as the term goes. Did you ever see such a set ? That old woman with the grey curls, is she not perfectly appalling ? She is uncommonly like the picture of Old

Mother Hubbard. Fancy her going in for this sort of thing. Surely there is a time for everything."

"Well, if she can enjoy it, clearly the time is not past in her case," replied Beatrice, laughing.

"They are a horrid-looking set of cads, I must say," he continued, "let us give them a wide berth."

"I agree with you," answered Beatrice, "that standing here looking at them is neither pleasant nor profitable, and is wasting our valuable time into the bargain. I am longing to see the waterfall."

Sir John walked beside Constance, while the others started off at a quick pace, stopping now and then to inspect a particularly picturesque chalet, or some of the stalls on which various articles of carved wood or ivory were displayed, and then again pausing to watch the women who were engaged in lace-making.



“I never met with anyone who enjoys things more than you do, Miss Annesley.”

“Of course I do; it is all new to me, you know. I cannot tell you how much I enjoy being abroad. I am already beginning to look forward with despair to the time when we shall turn our backs on all this, and go back to England; and as the present alone is what belongs to us, I am doing my best to make the most of it.”

“There is no need, then, to ask you whether your first visit to the Continent has been as great a pleasure as you expected it to be; if it has, you have indeed something to be thankful for. Very few people can find their anticipation of any enjoyment fully realised; almost everything is imperfect. One always feels, I think, that even if we are charmed or pleased, we might have been still more so; and if a thing is capable of becoming better,

or a joy more intense, it proves that in itself it is imperfect."

"But I would rather not stop to consider whether it might be better. I prefer being contented and satisfied with what it is. I am afraid you have rather an ungrateful disposition, Captain Barrington."

"Well, I ought to improve in your society, then, for I believe you always take the brightest view of everything, human nature included; but perhaps you have not had as many things in your short life to induce you to take a gloomy view of the world as I have. However, I will try and follow your example, and enjoy the present; for, as you truly say, the present only belongs to us. What a pity we cannot wash away the past, and direct our future as we most wish."

"Of course, the past being gone, nothing in it can be undone. I suppose almost everybody would wish that they could

undo some things in it," replied Beatrice gravely; "but the future is a different thing; as long as we are free agents, it must surely be greatly in our own hands."

"That depends on circumstances. Some people's lives are made a curse to them by the influence and interference of others," replied Allan Barrington, in a hard and bitter voice.

Beatrice glanced at her companion, and was pained to see the change in his face. They walked on in silence, and somehow it seemed to her as if a cloud had fallen on the brightness of the day.

"We have quite out-walked the others," he observed, presently; "had we not better sit down here and wait for a few moments. My uncle is not good for much walking, and I fear your sister is not very strong, she is looking so sad and depressed. I never saw anybody so changed since she left Homburg."

“I do not think she does seem very well,” replied Beatrice, wondering how much her companion knew or guessed as to the estrangement between her sister and Hubert. Something of it, she felt sure, he must know. “Yes, we will wait for them,” she added. “I will sit down on these stones.”

Captain Barrington leaned against the wall beside the path, and proceeded to light a cigar.

“There are some people on the other side of the wall,” said Beatrice, after a few moments. “I can hear their voices quite distinctly ; they are English.”

“American, if you please, judging by the accent of the speaker,” replied Allan, raising himself so as to look towards the spot from whence the sound came.

The speaker was a girl, young, and decidedly pretty, with reddish hair ; her companion a handsome but heavy-looking man.

She was sitting on a fallen tree, and he lying on the grass at her feet.

“How dull you are, Jack,” she was saying; “cannot you find something to say? All you do from morning to night is to smoke. I don’t believe you ever open your lips, except to put food into your mouth or that eternal pipe, and puff out volumes of smoke into my eyes. Other people may think them worth looking at; you never seem to,” and she frowned rather crossly at the offender.

“I have not got anything to say, Lou, or I would say it; but I think all the same.”

“Think!” cried the girl scornfully; “I don’t believe you *can* think; I calculate there is a deal of cotton wool all round your brains. I don’t believe your thoughts, if you had any, could ever get through it, they are far too feeble.”

“Well, you know, Lou, you talk by a long way better than I can; so it is best

that you should speak and I should listen."

"Pleasant for me, I must say. Pray, do you suppose it is lively to be talking always to a log, or a stick, or a stone ; for it strikes me you might just as well be any of the three for all the society you are to me?"

"I would tell you something if I could think of anything new. I told you just now, Lou, that I thought you had grown prettier than ever, and that your dress was lovely."

"Have you been away four months across the Atlantic and back, and picked up nothing newer or more amusing than that to tell me? Why, I have heard that remark made scores of times since you left, only not in such stupid, dull words as you express it in."

"Sorry to hear it," replied her companion, without removing his pipe from his mouth.

“We ought not to stay here and listen to their conversation,” said Beatrice, in a low voice; “let us go on a little farther, though I am very sorry for it, for it amuses me very much.”

“I suppose that interesting couple are engaged to be married,” he replied, “though, judging from the tone of her remarks, it strikes me there is a possibility that she may change her mind before the day comes.”

“Fancy not being able to find anything to say to the girl you are going to marry, except that she has grown prettier than ever, and has a very pretty dress,” said Beatrice, laughing merrily.

“I can quite imagine the thing possible,” answered Allan quietly. “It is a great mistake to suppose a man is always desperately in love with the girl he is going to marry.”

“I am surprised at you,” replied Beatrice, with a look of horror; “only I do not be-

lieve you mean what you say. First of all, it would be wicked to marry a girl you did not love ; and it is nonsense too, because if people do not love each other, why should they marry ? But that girl's remarks remind me of a story my father tells of a conversation he overheard once. He arrived at a small station one day, called Barton Roads, and found he had missed the train he intended going by to Dingeston, and had to wait an hour, so he went into a sort of tea-garden near the station, and sat down and smoked. A man and woman were sitting at a table close by, and he overheard her say,—

“ ‘ Spake to me, John.’ ”

“ ‘ I ha’n’t nowt to say.’ ”

“ ‘ Tell me ye luve me, John.’ ”

“ ‘ I tell’d ye so afore.’ ”

“ ‘ Won’t ye give me a kiss, John ?’ ”

“ ‘ Presently.’ ”

“ Shows that human nature is much the



same all over the world, Miss Annesley," replied Allan, as he ceased laughing over Beatrice's story, told with a broad Yorkshire accent. "Here they come," he continued, as Sir John and Constance appeared; "they both seem to have had walking enough."

"How you two young folks have got ahead of us, Miss Bee," cried Sir John; "your sister and I will sit down here and wait for you, if you are still minded to go on and see the waterfall, only you must not be too long about it, as we have to go on to Grindelwald for our luncheon. So, Allan, look sharp, and be sure you let this young lady get a good splash of the spray in her face, which she seems very anxious to do. What a dear little creature she is," he continued to Constance, as he watched the two figures as they disappeared up the steep path; "and Allan seems to be quite of my mind."

“There is nobody like Bee. I do not say so because she is my sister, but till you live with her, you can have no idea how good and unselfish she is. I suppose that is one reason why everybody is so fond of her.”

“The best of all reasons, and quite enough to make her happy ; and, bless her bright face, she certainly gives me the idea of being most thoroughly so. I like looking at a face like hers. One wonders sometimes what the future will bring forth for her. It is a comfort, at any rate, to know, be it what it may, there is some stuff in her which will help her along the right road. I do not mind telling you in confidence, my dear Lady Denzil, that I can see Allan is very much taken with your little sister, and if she can make up her mind to care for him, I should be uncommonly glad, for he is a thoroughly good fellow. Riches, I am afraid, are not

likely to fall in his way, but he will eventually be very fairly well off ; and unless a girl has fixed her heart on a title and a large fortune, she may do worse than marry my nephew."

"And how little real happiness riches bring, after all," said Constance, with a sigh.

"They are not to be despised, though."

"Ah ! but, Sir John, nobody can be happy unless there is love as well as fortune."

"Most certainly not. I am the last person to recommend people to marry unless they can love and esteem each other, still, there is a great deal to be said in favour of a certain income, ensuring certain comforts ; it oils the wheels of the machinery of life, and smooths away a great many difficulties."

"But love is a thing you cannot command at your will ; you cannot make your-

self love a person, merely because you may wish to do so."

"Dear Lady Denzil, there are many sorts of love; it is a subject I may speak of to you openly, as I am a very old man, and you a very young woman. There is love which is excited, we know not how, by a certain sympathy and attraction; very often it is founded on no particular similarity of tastes, nor on any great respect for the person on whom we bestow this love, a love full of passion, and as unreasoning as passion always is. There is another love, one generally of slower growth, which is created in us sometimes by knowing that we ourselves are the objects of great devotion from others, springing, therefore, in the first instance from gratitude; and, if the individual be one worthy of our respect and esteem, the love thus created in us is of a lasting and ennobling sort; in the long run it is the most satisfactory and the happiest. And how

often do people throw away such an affection, and live to regret it most bitterly ; to learn what they have lost when it is beyond their power to recall it. Speaking of this reminds me of a sad story, one that I have never forgotten, though it is some years ago since it happened."

"I wish you would tell it me, Sir John. Do you mind?"

"The actors in it were all dear to me, one of them especially so, and it is a painful memory to me, but I will tell you about it. I knew a girl, in fact had known her from her babyhood, her mother being one of my oldest friends. This girl fell in love with a young man, a thorough gentleman, but with no fortune to speak of ; he was at the time wholly dependent on his success at the bar. He went and spoke to her mother, and asked to be allowed to plead his cause with her daughter, and was then told that such a step would be useless, as her parents would never

consent to the marriage. The mother told him that, from her knowledge of her child's character, she felt convinced she was unfit to become the wife of a poor man, and begged him, if he cared for her daughter, to keep silence towards her on the subject, as it would only increase her unhappiness ; that in time she would become reconciled to the impossibility of a marriage between herself and her lover. The man behaved honourably, he absented himself from every place where he was likely to meet the girl. A year after she married a good, honourable man, and one for whom I had the highest esteem. She did not love him as she ought to have done, but she allowed herself to be persuaded by her mother to accept him for her husband, and he certainly was a man calculated to make any woman happy. I do not say I think her mother was wise in influencing her daughter as she did. The girl, however, consented, and, having done

so, was bound to do her best to make the man she married happy. But she did not. Her husband was devoted to her. I have often wondered at his patience under her coldness and indifference. The more devoted he seemed to her, the less consideration did she appear to feel for him. I spoke to her once during one of the many visits I paid them. I pointed out to her the wrong she was doing. She took my plain speaking in very good part, but she did no better. One day she heard of the marriage of her old lover, and from that time she seemed to grow harder and more bitter, and her indifference to her husband increased. For some months I saw nothing of them. One April, in Paris, I met her husband. On my inquiring after his wife, he told me she was in England. He appeared restless and worn, was occasionally in very high spirits and at other times equally depressed. I met him several times with

some friends, cousins of his, he told me, one of them was a very pretty woman, a young widow. To make the story short, he had grown tired of a cold, indifferent wife, and he became devoted to another. From the bottom of my heart I feel sure he never really wronged his wife, but he no longer cared for her as he used to do. When later on, I saw them together, I noted the change. He was courteous, considerate as ever, but the love and tenderness that had marked every word and look he gave her, were wanting. She found out, too late, what she had thrown away. She realised then what he had been to her. She was never strong, caught a bad cold, which she neglected, and died, after a short illness. He was very kind, I cannot find a word to say against him, but she died, leaving hardly regret in her husband's heart."

"He was a brute!" cried Constance indignantly. "Whatever her faults might have been at first, she loved him at the end."



“Yes ; but she had killed his love by her indifference. Love is a plant that only flourishes in a congenial soil ; coldness sooner or later is sure to destroy it.”

“If a man had really loved a woman, as you say your friend did, he would not have tired of her.”

“No, Lady Denzil, you are wrong there.”

“And what became of the man ? I suppose he married the widow, and, as the story-books say, was happy all the days of his life.”

“He deserved to be loved, and to be happy ; and I have every reason to believe he was so.”

“It is a sad story,” said Constance ; “poor girl, I cannot help being very sorry for her. It was a hard fate.”

“Sorry, yes ; sorry for the perversity with which she threw away her happiness.”

“But it did not seem happiness to her. It was not her fault that she grew to care for her husband when it was too late.”

“My dear, it is everybody’s fault, if they will not try and find out all the good in life which is given to them, and if they persist in letting their minds dwell constantly upon what *might have been*, instead of striving to find happiness in what *is*. Besides, think of the selfishness of caring only to please oneself! Indifference to the happiness of others has a most hardening and deteriorating effect upon the character.”

“Yes, I suppose so,” replied Constance slowly; “but people’s ideas of happiness are so different. Once upon a time I thought nothing easier than to be happy; but I begin to find it is more difficult than I thought.”

“Do not you think, Lady Denzil, that

like many young people you have probably been in the habit of looking at life and happiness, among other things, through a pair of rose-coloured spectacles, and that you may never have looked at it as it really is? Supposing now you were to make up your mind that your former ideas of happiness were not quite right, it might help you to find out ways and means of being happy that you have never hitherto discovered."

"But one cannot change one's nature, Sir John?"

"I do not say that would be easy; but you may control and bend it somewhat. The first step is to consider your position in life,—what are your duties; what are the good things that have fallen to your lot; what are the bad ones;—to be thankful for the first, and try and bear the second as well as you can. Almost everybody has much to be grateful for; indeed, they would

often be surprised, on considering the subject, to find out how much. The habit of unthankfulness is, I fear, a very common one, and, if not checked, is apt to increase rapidly."

"But you cannot expect everybody to have the same tastes ; to find happiness or pleasure in the same things. How often that is the case between husbands and wives," said Constance, and her colour deepened.

"That, unfortunately, is often true ; but in such cases there should be a mutual forbearance,—each should aim at conceding a good deal to the other."

"But women are always expected to be the ones to give way," she answered, rather bitterly.

"Not in all cases, I hope," replied Sir John, smiling. "I know one husband, I am sure, who will always be willing, even anxious, to please his wife, and that is my

friend Hubert. I have known your husband from his childhood, so I ought to be able to form some opinion on that subject."

"But Hubert and I do not at all agree as to what amuses us or makes life pleasant and happy."

"Indeed! How is that?" asked Sir John, with well-feigned surprise.

"He hates balls, society, in short everything that is amusing."

"Ah, balls! I understand his not caring for them. Poor boy, his stiff knee prevents his dancing; but I feel sure he will be quite willing that his wife should go to them in reason, and you, of course, would be willing to consider his feelings on the subject; and as to society in general, I should be very sorry to see either of you give that up, as you are both young and well fitted to enjoy it; and I feel certain he will be quite content to conform himself

to a way of life that he thinks pleasant and agreeable to his wife. You must remember that when a man is first married he is inclined to be a little exigent about his wife's society. We are apt to be so when we first become possessors of something very precious to us. But, talking of pleasure, there is one thing, my dear lady, you must bear in mind, and that is, that it is a bad habit to seek too much after pleasure or excitement,—I mean, to give yourself too much up to mere amusement, and to expect to find happiness in that. Always remember that people who give themselves up entirely to pleasure-seeking are certain, sooner or later, to suffer from that deadly enemy 'ennui.' Pleasure after a time palls on us; and those who keep up a lively appearance are often secretly devoured by ennui. Disguise it from yourself as you will, the habit of always rushing after pleasure takes all the charm out of it

sooner or later ; there is a sameness, a dullness even in the very things which formerly amused us, and at the last, more often than not, they end in disgusting us. Moderation is a great virtue, and should be exercised in our pleasure-seeking as well as in all other things. You are young now, and life seems to you a long thing. God grant it may be so, but it passes away quickly, I can tell you ; when your first youth is gone by, what will you have done to fit yourself to be happy in middle age, or still more in old age, if you have made no interests of a better sort for yourself during your youth ? People who are happy in themselves require less in the way of amusement, they carry about with them a fund of happiness and interest. We should try to live more for others, and less for ourselves, and strive to find out what interests we can make for ourselves, apart from our own selfish pleasure.


Here come our young friends, so if you are rested, my dear Lady Denzil, I think we ought to make our way back to the inn, and start at once for Grindelwald."







## CHAPTER VII.

“ HEAR you want me,” said Sir John, the morning following this expedition to Lauterbrunnen, as he entered Lady Denzil’s sitting-room and found Beatrice awaiting him.

“Yes, I hope you do not mind being disturbed so early; and I am afraid you may not yet have had your breakfast,” suggested Beatrice apologetically; “but I am very anxious about Conty. I am afraid she must have got over tired yesterday, for this morning she seems really ill. She is suffering a good deal of pain. I cannot make out what is the

matter with her, but Stevens, her maid, says she must certainly see a doctor."

"Decidedly, she must do so ; I will go and find out at once who we must send for. I trust it will be nothing serious, so do not anticipate evils before they arrive, my dear little girl."

"But Conty is not naturally very strong, and only think if she falls ill while Hubert is away. I was just writing to him, for I promised to let him know at once if anything went wrong with Conty."

"I must beg, however, you will do nothing of the kind, at any rate not before we have seen the doctor. Just think what a state of mind the poor boy would work himself into. He will be imagining all sorts of horrors, and we shall have him back here post haste, and undoing all the good we are trying to achieve ; no, you must be guided by me in this matter."

Beatrice reluctantly consented to destroying her letter.

Dr Smith arrived in less than an hour, and had a long interview with his patient.

“She is not seriously ill, I hope?” asked Beatrice, when he rejoined her.

“I am glad to say there is no cause for anxiety, Miss Annesley, she is suffering a good deal at present, and will have to keep her bed for a few days. I have given full directions to the maid, who seems a very sensible person. I shall return and see your sister this afternoon.”

“Do you think I ought to write to my brother-in-law, who is now in England? for if there is a chance of her becoming worse, he will naturally wish to rejoin us as soon as possible.”

“Before he could get out here, I trust Lady Denzil will be much better,” replied Dr Smith; “of course, you must write if you think proper, but there is no necessity

for his coming out, as I do not apprehend any danger from your sister's condition. I shall see Sir John Hardcastle before I leave the hotel, as he tells me your sister and yourself are under his charge."

Beatrice decided she would ask Conty whether she should write to Hubert ; perhaps her sister would express a wish that he should return to her, and that would indeed be a satisfactory sign.

Conty, however, decidedly negatived the idea of anything being said to her husband about her illness. When Sir John came up again a little later, he took the same view as Conty did, so Beatrice submitted, with a feeling, however, that she was hardly keeping her promise to Hubert as faithfully as she ought to."

"Dr Smith tells me he is not at all anxious about your sister," observed Sir John. "When she is a little better we must do our best to amuse her ; but

frankly I must tell you that I wish her to learn to miss Hubert, and when she is weak and entirely dependent on others, she is likely to do so much more readily."

Beatrice was an admirable nurse; she devoted herself entirely to her sister, and could scarcely be persuaded to leave her. As long as Constance was confined to her room, Sir John let her have her own way, but when once the invalid was able to lie on a sofa, in the adjoining sitting-room, he insisted on Beatrice going out daily for a drive or a walk. He would sometimes accompany her and Allan, who always joined them, or he would offer to remain with Constance, and read or talk to her, and, as she seemed to like his doing so, it often ended in the two young people enjoying a *tête-à-tête* walk together, which they preferred to driving. Beatrice had long ceased to disguise from herself that she had grown to care very much for

Allan Barrington's society; but how it would all end was a question she had shrunk from putting to herself. For the present, she felt happy and contented. She did a great deal of sketching. He would sit by her side keeping the sun off her, or dispersing the ragged children who invariably favoured them with their society. He had begun by bringing a book out with him, and had announced his intention of reading aloud to her; but he had never made a beginning, till one day Beatrice asked him whether he intended carrying that particular volume about with him for the rest of his life.

“Are you going to remain with your sister when you return to England, Miss Annesley?” he asked her, when they were sitting on the hillside one afternoon.

“That is a question I am sorry to say I cannot answer. I wish I could say Yes;—but I am almost afraid it will be No. Just

now there is a correspondence going on between papa and Conty on the subject; she and Hubert want me to live principally with them."

"And your father does not seem to see it. I can quite sympathise with him. He wishes to keep you himself. Well, he is not singular in his wishes."

"If I thought my remaining at home added to my father's happiness, I should not hesitate; but I do not think it does; he is rather anxious I should go to Conty; he thinks it would be an advantage for me in some ways; but Mrs Annesley wishes me to remain at home. I am useful to her, and papa does not care about that."

"I knew your father had married again. Do you mind telling me about your home life? because, when I know people well, and care about them, I like hearing about their life and their surroundings."

Beatrice's eyes drooped as they en-

countered the earnest expression written in his.

“I am afraid I cannot tell you anything very pleasant, for our home is not a very happy one. I am not surprised, when I think of it, that Conty was glad to leave it, for she got on less well than I do with Mrs Annesley ; and then she had so much more of it, for I have been three years at school. I left it when I was sixteen, two years ago, and I am eighteen now.”

“Yes ; ” replied Captain Barrington, “sixteen and two do generally make eighteen. But what sort of person is Mrs Annesley ? I am sure it must be her fault if you do not get on well with her.”

“I do not think anybody would, what you call get on well with her. She is not strong, and cultivates ill health, if you can understand what I mean. She cares very little about anything, except perhaps her



children, and they are very tiresome and spoilt."

"Well, why do you not keep them in order; box their ears, put them in the corner, and, generally, chastise them?"

"Ah! if she would only let me do something of that sort; but she never shows any animation about anything, except her children. She is furious if any one contradicts them. It is a great pity. She spends most of the day on a sofa, reading novels; how it is she does not get sick of them I cannot think; but you can understand that as she never looks after the servants, or anything else, our home is as uncomfortable and ill-managed as it can well be, and to add to the difficulties, my father, you know, is a poor man. Of course, I know money is not everything, but I have no sympathy with people who despise riches," and she sighed, as a remembrance crossed her mind of all the many quarrels

and scenes she had assisted at. "Oh, yes, I respect money, it is a very desirable commodity."

Captain Barrington seemed to have fallen into a reverie; he was asking himself whether all women were mercenary. From what he had seen at Homburg, and from a few observations he had heard his uncle make, he had gathered that Hubert Denzil's fortune and position had induced Constance to marry him; indeed, how else could one account for her evident indifference to him; and was this girl, whom he had grown to love with the whole strength of his nature, cast in the same mould? would *she* consider her aim in life attained by securing a rich husband? The idea was dreadful, for he had endowed her with every virtue; she seemed so thoroughly true-hearted and unworldly. At last he said, in a cold voice,—

"I am sorry you think that there is no

happiness in this world except in the possession of large means, Miss Annesley ; it is rather a worldly theory for anyone as young as you are."

"I never said anything of the kind," replied Beatrice quickly ; " I said I did not despise money ; no more I do ; I consider it helps to smooth away many difficulties. I said exactly what I meant, neither more nor less. I am sure I have plenty of reason for thinking so. However, I was wrong, perhaps, in speaking to you as I did about Mrs Annesley. I ought to remember she is my father's wife. I have often thought she might have been a happier woman, and far more agreeable to live with, had her temper been less tried by having always to do without the luxuries she values so highly, and, for myself, I must say it would have been a great comfort not to have constantly to try and find ways and means to do without things that are almost abso-

lute necessities, because one cannot pay for them. As you think I am worldly, I do not mind telling you that almost everything I have on at this moment was given to me by my sister. Hubert told her to get everything I wanted ; but Conty said what he gave her was enough for us both." Her colour had risen considerably, for his words had stung her, and she spoke in a dry, incisive manner, while she busied herself in collecting and putting up her drawing materials. "We must be going home," she added, after a pause, "Conty will be wanting me."

"There is a great deal of truth in what you say, Miss Annesley ; all I hope is that you will find some man who will combine riches with all other desirable qualities, on whom you will some day bestow your hand, for I am sure that a large fortune alone will never make you happy. He will be a happy

man, whoever he may be, at any rate," he added, with a sigh.

"I do not see what right you have to say anything of this sort to me," she answered, hotly. "I have never thought of marrying anybody, rich or poor. However, you may be sure when I do, I shall take care that I like him sufficiently well to spend my whole life with him, for to marry a man one does not care for would be worse than poverty itself."

"I beg your pardon, I am afraid I have vexed you ; but very unintentionally. I was making good wishes for your future happiness."

She made no reply, and walked on quickly till they reached the hotel, which was close by.

There was something in his words which had wounded her exceedingly. Perhaps he thought that Conty had married for money, and that she would be prepared to do the

same. He had no right to assume such a thing. She felt his words were unjust, and she resented them accordingly. When they reached the hotel she went upstairs without another word. Captain Barrington sat down on a bench in the garden and began to smoke. He knew he had hurt her, and felt much annoyed with himself; but the words had escaped him unawares. He fancied that the great happiness which he had been longing for was slipping from his grasp. Why had he not a larger share of this world's goods? he asked himself angrily. And yet at the same time he felt it would be repugnant to him to marry a girl in whose eyes money was the first and most desirable consideration. A thousand times no; if she could not love him for himself, and be contented to share his lot, such as it was, he would rather never see her face again. But how dear she was to him; poor child, she must have suffered from the

worries of her home life, and, at her age, they must have disgusted and wearied her. Was this happiness he had counted on, this love which seemed so full of promise in the future, to end in nothing but disappointment? Was there, as he had often been tempted to ask himself, a curse on him? and then he gave himself up to the consideration of certain circumstances in his past life, which, to judge from the expression of his face, were of a most unpleasing description. His reflections were, however, interrupted by the appearance of his uncle.

“You did not stay out long, Allan; I suppose the little girl was anxious to get back to her sister. What an unselfish little mortal it is; what a first-rate wife she will make to the lucky fellow who wins her.”

“What sort of a man is Colonel Annesley?” asked Allan.

“It is a long time since I have met him. He was in the Guards formerly,

and was a very good-looking fellow ; but I fancy rather fast. His first wife, the mother of these girls, was a pretty, gentle-looking woman, with a great look of little Bee. After her death he married a widow, who had money ; but Hubert tells me Annesley has contrived to muddle away most of it. I do not fancy the marriage has turned out well, there is always a great scarcity of funds, and at their father's death the elder children will have a mere pittance. However, of one thing I am quite certain, however uncomfortable the want of money in the family may make them, Annesley will take care that he does not suffer himself."

"I suppose Lady Denzil married for money, as she does not seem particularly devoted to Hubert ?"

"I am afraid it had something to do with it," replied Sir John ; "but had she objected to the marriage, I daresay her father would have driven her into it."



“And I presume Miss Annesley will have the worldly wisdom to follow her sister's example. ‘All I can hope is she will meet with as good a fellow as Hubert.”

“I should very much doubt her doing anything of the kind,” answered Sir John shortly. “Unless I am much mistaken, she is made of very different stuff from her sister. That girl will never marry any man she does not love and respect. I am surprised you have not been able to understand her character rather better by this time,” and Sir John scanned his nephew's countenance rather closely.

But whatever Allan Barrington's thoughts may have been, he kept them to himself, and as he seemed sulky and disinclined to talk, Sir John soon left him to his reflections.





## CHAPTER VIII.

**T**HE days which passed so quickly and pleasantly to Beatrice and her two companions seemed to Constance both long and weary. She tired of her books and her work, and nothing amused her. Beatrice had gone out one afternoon for a drive with Sir John and his nephew. Constance had insisted on her doing so, for she had quite realised how much her sister enjoyed the society of the latter; but as she lay on her sofa alone, she felt very solitary and depressed. She was one of those people who never like being alone; she wearied

soon of her own society. A feeling of almost envy came over her as she thought of her sister's happiness, not that she grudged it to her, or would have wished it otherwise, only it made her feel sad when she thought that she had nothing like it herself. She longed to have some one with her, who cared for her most of all. She thought over her past life and pitied herself exceedingly. She was so young that it seemed hard she should be unhappy. Her tears began to flow, why or wherefore she knew not, unless because she felt sad and lonely. She opened the smelling-bottle lying on the table beside her, and turned it round absently. It was a very handsome one, with her cipher and coronet on the top, and a remembrance came to her of the day that Hubert had brought it to her, telling her that the one she generally used was not half good enough for her. She also recollected how little grateful she had been

to him, taking his gift quite as a matter of course. A feeling of regret stole into her heart ; how often she had hurt him in small trifles of that kind ! He, at any rate, was devoted to her, made her his first object in life, and never seemed to care for anybody's society as he did for hers. Kind as Sir John and her sister were, they were quite happy away from her. She missed the devotion which previously she declared had bored her. A wish rose to her lips that he were with her now. Little incidents she had forgotten kept recurring to her, instances of his constant thoughtfulness for her. How badly she had behaved to him, and perhaps he might end in ceasing to care for her, as the husband of the woman Sir John was telling her of had done.

A feeling of terror took possession of her at the idea, which astonished her. Could she be really growing to care for her

husband? And then she began to wonder why he had gone to Scotland; somehow his doing so had vexed her. She longed to know what sort of people these Murrays were, with whom he was staying. Sir John had told her a good deal about them. He told her that they were connections of Hubert's, and that he had formerly been a good deal with them, as a boy. He had also told her that he imagined Hubert's engagement to her must have been rather an unwelcome piece of news to some members of the family, as he knew it had always been surmised that he would marry the eldest daughter, Minna Murray, who was a charming girl, and very pretty. At any rate, Sir John had added, Hubert would find himself in very good quarters, as they were all very much attached to him, and would do their best to spoil him.

Poor Constance little guessed that Sir

John himself had urged Hubert to propose paying a visit to the Murrays, and what trouble he had taken to arouse a spark of jealousy in her heart, or she might not have resented so keenly his having gone to stay in Scotland.

Five weeks had already elapsed since her husband had left her, and as yet he had not said one word as to his desire to rejoin her. She reviewed her conduct towards him since her marriage, and with shame she acknowledged that she could remember nothing but coldness and indifference on her part, and slavish devotion on his. It was true that at times he had given vent to bursts of indignation, and had even upbraided her strongly, but how often she had seen him wince at any taunt or slight from her, and yet remain silent. Was he happier now he had left her? She was surprised at the pang the thought gave her. When he came back, how different she

would be. A fear came over her lest, when he should find himself in the society of a girl like Minna Murray, he might draw comparisons which would be unfavourable to her. A longing came over her to write and ask him to return, but her pride prevented her. He had gone to amuse himself in Scotland; had he been unhappy he would hardly have cared to do that. And poor Constance succeeded in working herself up into a state of utter misery. Was she beginning to care for her husband? and perhaps it was too late; whereupon she fell to sobbing bitterly. Even Guy, poor Guy, had told her that she owed a duty to the man she had married, and the first thing she had done was to send him away from her. She felt astonished and almost horrified when she reflected how much more her thoughts had been of late with her husband than with the man who had died so lately, and whose memory she had

declared would never be absent from her mind. She cried till she became so exhausted that she fell into a heavy, dull slumber.

She was still sleeping when Beatrice returned, but the sound of the door opening, awoke her.

“Have you had a good sleep, Conty? But what have you been doing, your eyes are so red and swollen? I am sure you have been crying.”

“I am so unhappy, so utterly miserable;” here Constance’s tears began to flow again.

“And crying makes you worse, darling,” replied her sister, as she knelt by her side, and stroked the golden hair lovingly.

“I cannot help feeling what a mistake my whole life has been, how wretched I have made myself, and all belonging to me.”

“You have done nothing you cannot undo, dear Conty.”



“Do not say that, Bee, I shall always feel that Guy's death lies on my conscience.”

“Even in reproaching yourself, you should be reasonable. It is true that for a time you made Guy very unhappy ; but his dying of fever in India was not your fault, it was God's will, your love could not have saved him. If you go on making Hubert unhappy, it will be your fault, and one you will have to answer for, and, dear Conty, think how little is required to make him happy ; he is so devoted to you.”

“I am not so sure of that ; perhaps, now he is away from me, he is happier.”

“That I am sure is not true,” replied Beatrice, laughing ; “and I do not believe you think so yourself.”

“If he cared for me, why did he go off to stay with those people in Scotland, instead of coming back here ?” asked Constance stubbornly.

“Did you suggest he should return ? As

you were the cause of his going away, surely you must see it is your business to ask him to come back again. Try and imagine what he must feel. You tell him his presence is distasteful to you ; he would be wanting in proper pride, to return, unless you expressed a wish that he should do so."

"It is five weeks since Hubert left, and I am getting very tired of being here ; in a few days Dr Smith says I may go somewhere else ; where shall we go, Bee ?"

"Where ?" asked her sister, in a tone of astonishment. "Why, do you not intend going home ?"

"Certainly not ; unless Hubert asks me to do so."

"Conty, what nonsense you talk, as if you did not know Hubert is longing to have you with him."

"No, I do not know it ; and I am not going to take it for granted."

Beatrice stared at her sister in amazement.

"Sometimes," she observed, "I do not understand you at all."

"It would be strange if you did, seeing I do not understand myself. Sometimes I almost long to see Hubert again; it is quite true, Bee. I know I have done him a great injury, and I ought to tell him so. I am sorry, but I cannot do it. I daresay it is very cowardly, but I am afraid he might despise me, and it would be intolerable if I thought he cared less for me than he did before."

"Oh, Conty! if you would only tell him just those words, how happy you would make him."

"Men change, as I told you before," said Constance, with an air of superior wisdom. "I have heard of such cases."

"Hubert never would, he is so thoroughly loyal."

"I have behaved very badly to Hubert, and have tried him very much, and I am

heartily sorry, and if he came back to me unchanged, I would tell him so, but nothing shall induce me to write and tell him so."

"Then I will!" exclaimed Beatrice.

"I will never forgive you if you do," cried Constance, starting from the sofa.

"You will do more harm than good."

"Do not excite yourself, Conty, but I cannot help telling you, I think you are acting in a very selfish way; you think only of yourself, why cannot you try and think sometimes of others?"

"It is natural I should have some self-respect, you will allow."

"You are mistaken, it is not self-respect; you may try and delude yourself into believing it to be so, but it is really nothing but pride or vanity, whichever you may prefer calling it. You say you are afraid of letting yourself down by acknowledging you have been in the wrong. When you know that you have been so, self-respect

should rather lead you to confess it. Do try and use your reason. It strikes me you cannot really care about Hubert, if you are ashamed of telling him you are sorry for all the pain you have given him and are anxious to do better."

"Have it your own way, you may be right," replied Constance, and an obstinate frown settled on her forehead. "Anyhow, I shall not do it."

"Poor Hubert, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and as to his going to Scotland, I am quite comforted by the thought that he may be enjoying himself, and that being with people who are so fond of him may make him forget his own troubles ;" with which parting shot Beatrice left the room.





## CHAPTER IX.

“**Y**OUR sister has been talking to me about leaving here,” said Sir John, a few days later, when he found himself alone with Beatrice ; “ she says she is tired of this place, and fancies the air is relaxing ; perhaps a change may do her good. But the question is, how about Hubert ? Poor boy, every letter I get from him contains the same question : when is he to be allowed to rejoin his wife ? ”

“ Yes, he writes in the same way to me. It is lucky he sends his letters to me under cover to you, Sir John, or Conty would find out his wishes more quickly than we desire.

I do not think he seems to be enjoying his shooting very much, though he is such a keen sportsman. Conty has rather taken offence at his having gone to Scotland, and to stay with the Murrays."

"Ah! that is just what I was wishing she should feel. I did my best to persuade her that he was going to a place where he could not fail to be happy. I saw the little lady did not quite like it, so I added a considerable amount of praise in my description of Minna Murray; in fact, I drew a good deal on my imagination," continued Sir John, in a tone of satisfaction.

"Well, you succeeded, Sir John," replied Beatrice, laughing, "for, if it is possible, I fancy Conty is just a little bit jealous of this fascinating Miss Murray."

"Capital!" answered Sir John, rubbing his hands.

"And, do you know," continued Beatrice, "I really believe she is beginning to miss

Hubert very much ; she was telling me two days ago, that she felt very sorry for the way she had behaved to him, and declared that if he came back to her, and she felt sure his love for her was unchanged, she hoped and intended to be quite different in the future.

“ Bless me ! ” cried Sir John, “ does she think the poor boy has a chance of forgetting her, he is far too desperately in love with her for that, and absence, as the old saying goes, has made the heart grow fonder in his case I take it. Why does she not write, and tell him what she feels ? ”

“ I have said everything I can to her, but Conty is very obdurate ; she always was.”

“ Weak characters generally are, my dear child ; the only thing is to let her go her own way, and when she finds he does not return, she will think better of it. Nothing will so surely prevent her again from making him wretched, as having to make the first step



towards a reconciliation herself. So now the question is, when shall we leave here, and where shall we go? We might go to Thun, and if we like ourselves there, stay a week or two; so find out what your sister would prefer."

"Dr Smith said she might leave here in a few days. To-day is Thursday. Supposing we were to start on Monday next?"

"All right, settle it with her, and then I will tell Durand to order rooms; and now let us go and see what your sister wishes to do this afternoon."

"I had an idea of finishing a sketch, but I think Conty prefers my driving with her. I do not like leaving her too much, for she complains of being dull."

"I like her to be dull. Many a time have I left her and gone off with you and Allan, on purpose that she might miss her husband, and remember that she will never find the same consideration from others; it

did feel rather brutal, but I screwed up my courage nevertheless."

"What are your plans for to-day, my lady?" asked Sir John, when, accompanied by Beatrice, he rejoined Constance.

"I was thinking of going out for a drive," replied Lady Denzil; "but Beatrice wishes to finish a sketch she has begun."

"Then let me suggest that I should accompany you, and Allan, needless to say, will be delighted to escort your sister."

Beatrice said nothing; she had not forgotten how disagreeable Allan had made himself on the last occasion she went out sketching with him. After Constance had started with Sir John, she finished a long letter to Hubert, and finally, armed with her drawing-book, descended to the garden in search of her companion.

"At last," said Captain Barrington, as he advanced to meet her. "I thought you had

changed your mind, and were not coming out, Miss Annesley."

"I do not know whether you are prepared to go where I am going, Captain Barrington; but I am bound for the town to do some shopping before I go up the hill."

"Why should I object? I am prepared to follow wherever you may lead," he replied, taking her drawing-book from her and throwing away the end of his cigar.

"I am going to indulge in the unwonted luxury of spending some money," said Beatrice pointedly; "but it is a matter which will require some little consideration, for a little will have to go a long way."

"I promise to be very patient, and to give you any amount of good advice. I hear we are to say good-bye to this lovely place on Monday. I never enjoyed a month more than the one I have spent here."

"It certainly is a lovely place," replied Beatrice.

"I was not thinking so much of the beauty of the place as of the happiness I have enjoyed here. The worst of feeling happy is the reaction which is almost sure to follow ; nothing very delightful ever lasts in this world."

"If we were always looking out for that, we should never enjoy anything," answered Beatrice. "What we have enjoyed is something to be thankful for, no matter what happens afterwards, nothing can destroy it. I look upon it as something to the good. Here we are at my shop. Let us have an inspection of all the fascinating wood-work before we go in."

"By all means, looking does not cost anything."

Beatrice's purchases were small, merely a little work-box for her old nurse, and two small presents for the children.

“I have twenty-five francs,” she observed. “Conty insisted on giving them to me, and was quite vexed because I would not take more; but if she saw me buying presents for the brats, as she calls them, I am not sure but that she would repent her generosity; and I have sixteen francs still left; why, I am quite rich.”

“Before spending all your money, come over and look at the things in the shop over the way. I do not care much for all this wood-work—I was a little taken with it when we first came here—I suppose on the principle that familiarity breeds contempt. Now here are some very pretty things,” and he pointed to an array set forth in the windows of amber necklaces, carved ivory, silver and agate objects. “I want you to help me choose an amber necklace; do you like them?”

“They are lovely. I wanted Conty to buy one, but she says she is too fair to wear amber.”

“She is right. It is more becoming to dark hair.”

“How lovely all these silver things are,” cried Beatrice, as she advanced to the counter, on which were lying various silver cigarette and fusee boxes, necklaces, charms, and pencil-cases.

“It reminds one of the niello they make in Russia,” remarked Allan. “Cannot you find something there on which to expend your sixteen francs ; these pencil-cases are very pretty to hang to a watch-chain.”

“And spend all the money on myself ! That seems horribly extravagant.”

“I should call it only honest, seeing that it was given to you for that purpose.”

Finally Beatrice selected a very charming little pencil-case.

“And now, please, Miss Annesley, give me your advice about these amber beads. I like the pale colour of these, and the beads

are more regular ; in the other string they are larger."

"I like the pale colour the best," she replied.

"As we are of the same mind, I will decide upon them," he answered.

"I have your pencil-case in my pocket," observed Allan, as they left the shop. "I will give it you when we return home."

"And now we must go at once to the hill behind the hotel," said Beatrice, "or I shall never have time to finish my drawing."

When they had reached their destination, she asked him to cut her pencils, which he proceeded to do, and then he selected a smooth bit of turf, and seated himself beside her.

"What are you thinking of?" he asked, after a pause of some minutes, during which they had both been silent.

"I hardly know," she replied. "If such a thing were possible, I should be inclined

to say I was thinking of nothing ; but when I come to consider it, I believe, after all, I was thinking of the colour on the hill-side opposite us."

"So you were thinking, after all ; and so was I, but not of the hill-side."

"What then ?" she asked, smiling ; "of the worms you may be cutting to pieces with that murderous-looking knife of yours which you keep digging into the grass ?"

"I trust I am not putting an end to their existence. I was only wondering — but perhaps you would not care to hear my thoughts."

"I like hearing people's wonderings. Conty always says I spend my life in wondering. I am glad somebody else should be addicted to the same propensity."

"I was thinking about you," he said, suddenly. "I was wondering whether you were like any other girl I ever met."



“ And the conclusion ? ” she asked, rather nervously.

“ Is, that you are not.”

“ I am not sure whether I ought to feel complimented or not, Captain Barrington.”

He was silent.

“ Are you fond of reading people's characters ? ” she asked, after a pause. “ If you are, you may be sure that you make a great many mistakes.”

“ Why should you think so ? ”

“ Because when we judge others, we generally do so by the light of our own reason—our own experience ; we know nothing of the circumstances which may have brought them to think and feel as they do.”

“ Are you fond of reasoning, Miss Annesley ? ” “ If you are, you must be very unlike most women.”

“ I know, Captain Barrington, it is the fashion to say women cannot reason, but I think it is very stupid to tell them so, be-

cause it discourages them in trying to make use of what reasoning powers they may have, and, however little it may be, I presume they have some such powers."

"I do not think that some people, either men or women, ever use their reasoning powers at all," he answered; "they only copy others; and others, again, obscure what reason they have by allowing their passions to govern them."

"But the knowledge that we are tempted to let our passions govern our reason, ought to be a warning to us," said Beatrice.

"It ought, but we don't always do as we ought. At this moment, my passions are very much disposed to govern my reason. I am longing to do something my reason tells me is probably foolish."

"Then do not do it," she answered, in a low voice.

There was something in his manner, and

in the expression of his eyes, that made her feel constrained and uncomfortable.

“So that is your advice?” he replied; “I daresay it is very good, but I feel that my reason is getting the worst of it.”

“Well, as I do not know what you are thinking about, I can say no more. You ought to know yourself best, though we are told it is not easy to do so, but I think it is much harder to know others.”

A silence ensued, and Beatrice felt a strong inclination to abandon her sketch and return home. Suddenly Allan said,—

“It is a great mistake either to hope much or to fear much; but, on the whole, I think hoping is the least painful, even though we are conscious our hope may never be fulfilled. Fear brings the evil we dread upon us beforehand; we endure a double pain; we endure the anticipation as well as the reality, should our fears prove true.”

“ I think you are getting very depressing ; you make me feel quite melancholy. I wish you would talk of something pleasant on our last afternoon.”

“ You always like everything and everybody to be cheerful. I suppose you always feel happy, even though you have not had as much money to spend as you wished. You know you said one day how important a thing money was in everyday life.”

Her face grew scarlet. “ I know you chose to interpret the words I spoke as meaning much more than they really did,” she replied, haughtily ; “ and as you seemed to blame me for what I said, I prefer not arguing the subject over again.”

“ Do not be angry with me,” he urged, in a pleading voice, and he closed his knife with a jerk. “ I only referred to it because your words pained me, and I was not quite sure whether I might not have misunderstood you.”

"I do not see why they should have pained you ; they had nothing to do with you."

"How do you know ?" he asked, quickly ;  
"on the contrary, they had much to do with me. My reason, as I tell you, is at war with my passions, and is getting the worst of it. I want to ask you a question. Would you marry a poor man—I do not mean a beggar, but a man with a moderate income,—a man who had to fight his way in the world ; one who could provide you with all the necessaries of life, but who had neither a large fortune nor a brilliant position ?"

She averted her face, for one glance had been enough to tell her his meaning, but she answered, rather perversely,—

"I do not think it is necessary to consider that question till the time comes ; and it is one I should never consider at all, unless I liked the man who asked it."

"I do not understand you," he replied, in a deep voice ; " but there is one other question I should like to ask you."

"I do not promise to answer it," she replied, in a constrained tone.

"Supposing a man were engaged to be married to a woman he hated, do you think he is obliged to marry her?"

A wave of cold water seemed suddenly to have been dashed over the girl, and surprise at his question for the moment deprived her of speech. Allan Barrington sat with his eyes fixed on her, as if his life depended on her answer. Slowly the words came, and as if with an effort,—

"I cannot understand anybody being in such a position. If a man hates a woman, why should he be engaged to marry her?"

"It is a possible state of things, all the same," he answered, bitterly ; " in fact, in the case I was thinking of, it is a fact. And then, when he is tied, bound to this

woman, he meets another girl, and loves her as a man can only love once in his life. What is he to do ? ”

A horror was creeping over the poor girl. What was this ghastly story he was telling her, and what had she to do with it ?

“ Will you not answer me ? ” he asked, in a hoarse voice,—“ be merciful ! ”

“ What can I say ? ” she replied, in faltering accents ; “ I never heard of such a case. You must ask somebody older and wiser than me.”

“ Nobody else can help me ; you must be my judge ; it lies between us.”

“ I cannot,” she replied, briefly.

“ Do you want me to speak more plainly ? ” he asked passionately. “ Do not be cruel.”

“ Do you wish me to understand,” asked the girl, in a trembling voice, “ that you are in honour bound to another girl, and that I have come between you and her ? and that

you, knowing you could not marry me, have tried to win my love ; and that, such being the case, you appeal to me to tell you your duty ?—and then you ask *me* not to be cruel !” Her eyes flashed as she uttered the last words. “What have I done,” she continued, “that you should treat me in such a way ? Could you not leave me alone ? Cannot you be satisfied with breaking one woman’s heart ? It is you who are cruel !” she cried, passionately.

“Darling,” he implored, “listen to me ! I never for one moment intended to make you suffer. I never considered I was doing you any wrong. From the moment I first loved you, I resolved that you alone should be my wife. I can never marry anyone else. You do not mean to say you think that I am in honour bound to marry a woman I loathe ?—never ! I would die sooner. Unsay those cruel words. Do you not know how I love you ? Lift up your sweet face,



let me look into your eyes, my dear love,—only tell me that you love me, and will be mine.”

“I cannot,” she murmured, in a stifled voice.

His arm stole round her; with one hand he raised the drooping face till her eyes met his, and he read in them what her lips refused to say, and he pressed them in one long kiss.

“Oh, don’t!” she cried, freeing herself from his grasp; “you have no right to do that.”

“If you love me I have every right,” he replied, gaily.

“But I never said I did,” she whispered.

“Your eyes told me so, my little one, and there is no wrong. It is true I was engaged to be married, but I will break it off. It would be perjury to marry a woman I do not love.”

“But you should have done so before; it

would have been more just and honest, and, unless you are free, I can never promise to marry you. Does your uncle know about her?"

"No," he answered, shortly; "he would have hated it so. I never told him of it."

"Let me go now, please, because, as I have told you, I cannot promise to be your wife. I am sorry you ever told me you loved me. I will never marry a man who is engaged to another girl. If it is broken off, it would be different. I am not going to pretend that I do not care for you, as it would be false; but you must forget all you have said to me—at any rate, for the present."

"You do not really mean what you say?" he cried, vehemently; "would you sacrifice both our lives to a mere chimera; for I can call it nothing else."

"Unless she releases you, I will have nothing to do with you; I will not hear

another word. I do not think you have behaved kindly to me; for you ought to have broken off your engagement before you tried to win my love or spoke to me."

"But I have won it," he answered, triumphantly; "have I not?"

"Is it fair to ask me that question? Do you not think you have humbled me sufficiently?"

He threw himself on his knees beside her, and implored her forgiveness.

"You cannot mean what you say. I humble you? I, who worship the very ground you tread on. If I have acted wrongly, it has been from the strength of my love for you. I dared not wait till I was free; I was so afraid of losing you."

Tears had started to his eyes, and every feature bore traces of the pain he was suffering.

"Let me tell you the whole story from the beginning, and then you will be able to judge how far I am to blame."



## CHAPTER X.

“**L**ET me tell you the history of my life, or rather that part of it which is the cause of my unhappiness, and try, my darling, to be patient; try not to judge me hardly, though I know you have a right to blame me, nor can you do so more than I blame myself.”

“I do not wish to blame you,” replied Beatrice sadly. “I suppose it was our fate; tell me all, please.”

“When I was twenty I went to read with a man of the name of Hughes, before getting my commission. He was a clergyman, a Welshman, I believe. He had been originally in the army, and after taking

orders, had been some years chaplain in a garrison town. He was a good old fellow ; but I was his only pupil, and found it very dull, which may partly account for my infatuation. He had an only daughter, two years older than myself. How it came about I hardly know ; but I fell in love, or rather what in my boyish folly I believed to be love," he added, bitterly, "with Bessie Hughes. She gave me every encouragement, and it ended in my asking her to marry me. When I spoke to her father, to my surprise he refused his consent, and expressed his displeasure at my conduct in very strong terms. He declared I was far too young to think of marrying ; that he had no fortune to give his daughter, and that at his death she would only inherit a small amount of money for which he had insured his life. He reminded me that I was wholly dependent upon my mother ; and he asked me if I honestly believed a

marriage with his daughter was likely to meet with her approval. I was young and headstrong, and announced my intention of being guided by my own wishes in the choice of a wife. I entreated, I stormed at him ; but he remained firm, and Bessie's tears had no effect on him. He wrote to my mother without even asking my consent, and when her answer came expressing her complete disapprobation of my conduct, he begged that the matter might be considered settled ; — for the four months during which I was still to remain an inmate of his house, he trusted to my honour to say no more on the subject to his daughter. I need not tell you whether I obeyed him. I was in love, and Bessie gave me every encouragement. Day after day we met, spending hours together, till one day he found it out. I had gone out fishing, and Bessie had joined me as usual. The day after, he sent her away on a visit ;

but before we parted, I promised her to marry her as soon as I could. She made me repeat the words over and over again. She wrote to me a few days later, asking me to repeat my promise in writing, as it gave her comfort to read the words. She said she was broken-hearted, and her only chance of happiness lay in the thought of one day becoming my wife. I wrote, as she asked me to do, and promised to be true to her."

A shiver passed through the girl who sat listening intently to every word.

"Do not hate me, darling. I am trying to tell you the whole truth. During the year that followed, she wrote to me several times. And then one day Mr Hughes came to me in exceeding wrath, telling me that after what had passed, he could hardly believe I could have been capable of keeping up a correspondence with his daughter, and tempting her to disregard his express

commands. He denounced my conduct as dishonourable and ungentlemanly. I could have told him that the only letters I had written were in answer to those sent me by his daughter, and that I had never addressed her first. This all happened when I was barely twenty, more than eight years ago. When I was laid up with fever last winter at Muttra, as soon as I was able to move I went up with a brother officer of mine to Rawul Pindi. After we had been there about six weeks he left, and I was still too unwell to accompany him, and a few days after his departure I had a relapse, and was very ill again. I received at that time the greatest kindness from the doctor of the — Regiment, who was staying there with his wife. They took me into their own house, and nothing could exceed the care and attention they bestowed on me. In fact, had it not been for them it would have gone badly with me indeed.



One morning Mrs Davidson, the doctor's wife, came into my room with some letters, and among others one with a black edge. 'I knew you were a friend of my niece's,' she said, 'but I did not know you corresponded.' I asked her who her niece was; 'The writing will tell you,' she answered. 'I daresay you were not aware of the relationship. I expect my niece here any day now. Her letter will give you all the news about herself,' and she nodded to me, with a laugh, and left the room. I took up the letter, with a feeling of curiosity. The post mark was Bombay. I looked at the address, and utterly failed to guess who my correspondent could be. Eight years had passed away, and Bessie Hughes and everything connected with her had gone completely out of my mind, as completely as if she had never existed."

"You could never have really loved her then," murmured Beatrice, in a low voice.

“No, I do not suppose I ever did. In fact, I know I did not. Mine was the sort of fancy a boy takes for a pretty girl, his senior by some years. She was the only girl into whose society I was thrown, and at the time I was dull, idle, and bored. My first feeling on reading her letter was one of unmixed horror and disgust.”

“Oh! how could you?” cried Beatrice; “it was cruel.”

“Don’t judge me too hardly, or I shall not have the courage to go on. You do not know what it costs me to tell you all this. She told me of her father’s death, which had occurred quite suddenly six months before. She was alone in the world, and on her way to join her aunt, Mrs Davidson, who had offered her a home. She knew where I was, as she had often heard my name mentioned by her aunt. She wrote to tell me that her feelings for me were unchanged, and now that there

was no obstacle to our marriage, her father being dead, she claimed my promise of making her my wife. I confess I felt stunned. I had long ceased to have the smallest interest in her. I do not say I had ever had any serious thought of marrying, but had I wished to do so, it would never have entered into my head that I was in any way bound to Bessie Hughes. I looked upon all connected with her as a thing of the past, and I felt her conduct in thus thrusting herself upon me, without even first ascertaining what I might feel towards her, was most improper and unwomanly."

"No, you could never have loved her," again," repeated his companion. "Ah, women are much more true and constant than men!"

"Hush, child, you are not a fair judge. Do you suppose that years could make any difference in what I feel for you?"

"I sincerely trust they will, for more than ever I now see how impossible it will be that I should ever marry you."

"Can you think it right we should both sacrifice the happiness of our lives, because I gave a rash and foolish promise years ago, when I was a mere boy? No!" he continued, as the hot blood mounted to his forehead; "you would not hesitate for one moment, if you loved me as I love you."

"One may love a person very much, and long intensely for happiness, and yet not be willing to buy that happiness at the expense of all that is right and honourable. Do you think that I would consent to be your wife," and a blush rose to her face, "if I had to rob another woman of what belongs to her? I should never know a day's happiness if I did. But tell me what happened afterwards."

"I hate speaking of it," he answered,

with something like a groan. "Soon afterwards she arrived at Rawul Pindi. I should hardly have known her, she was so much changed. She had aged considerably. When I had last seen her she was a bright, fair-haired girl, with a brilliant colour and blue eyes. She had changed into a sickly - looking woman. All her charm and her freshness were gone; her manners were hard and bold. Altogether she was a totally different being from the Bessie Hughes I had known formerly."

"You ought to have loved her better when you saw how her love for you had changed and worn her out."

"Her love for me had nothing to do with it, I can swear. She told me she had clung all these years past to the promise I had given her of marrying her when I was able, and that, as she found herself alone, and dependent on others, she considered I was bound to perform my promise. She

never even pretended that her devotion to me induced her to seek me out. Do not think me a brute, my darling, but I was absolutely revolted. I told her plainly what I felt, but it was useless. She said she preferred marrying me with half my heart, to living the life which she would otherwise be doomed to. She brought out the letters I had written all those years ago, and asked me whether, as a man of honour, I could refuse to fulfil my pledge."

"It was a mean thing to do," half whispered Beatrice ; "it was but a selfish love after all."

"It was not love at all," he interrupted, angrily. "She never had a grain of real love for me. She is a cold, passionless, worldly woman. She wants a home and a husband ; and finds the only chance of obtaining them is by cursing my life."

"Hush," said Beatrice gently. "You may be wrong, she has at any rate been

faithful during all these years ; had she not really loved you she would have forgotten you long ago."

"Faithful ! yes, simply because she has found nobody to marry her. She would throw me over to-morrow if anything more to her advantage turned up. Would to God somebody would fall in her way !"

"But — if — supposing — I mean," said Beatrice, in a trembling voice, "you were to tell her all, do not you think she might have pity on you and release you from your promise. I cannot imagine any woman wishing to marry a man who had ceased to care for her. I could not conceive a more bitter fate."

"That I shall tell her all, you may be sure, but I know beforehand what her answer will be. I shall break it off, let her do and say what she likes. She may bring an action against me if she chooses, but no power on earth shall make me marry her.

No, darling," he continued, as Beatrice was about to protest, and he gazed at her with a look of passionate love, "you cannot really think it right I should marry a woman I do not love?"

"Still, you have promised; and you again acknowledged to her lately that you knew you were bound to fulfil that promise; so, unless she releases you from it, I think you are as much bound to her as if she were your wife. You have sinned against her already in letting your love stray from her to another, for she only has a right to your love—to your very thoughts."

She tried to speak bravely, but her voice broke down, and her tears fell fast. He threw himself beside her, he forgot everything but his exceeding love for her; he drew her towards him, holding her in a tight embrace, and covered her face with kisses.

"My darling, I cannot give you up; you do love me. I cannot break our lives;



you are my all ; will you not hold me absolved from my foolish promise ? Think to what a life you condemn me. Oh ! child do not break my heart as well as your own."

She wrenched herself from his grasp with a violent effort, and starting to her feet, said desperately,—

" You have no right to do this ; remember that every word you say is a treachery against her, and think how dishonourable and wicked you are making me. I do love you, it is true, I cannot help it ; but I will never say it again. I will try and bear it. I ought to be sorry that you love me, but I cannot be, not yet ; perhaps I may some day. I feel very, very sorry for you and for myself. I shall never forget that you have loved me ; I hope I may be forgiven for being so wicked. You must try and forget me, quite ; and you will try, will you not ? " she asked,

as she raised her face, with a pleading look in the large, sad eyes.

“Surely you cannot be child enough to think such a thing possible? Never will I even try to forget you. If I must marry, she must content herself with my name. I shall hate and loathe her for standing between me and what I love best on earth. Day and night, your dear face will be with me. Think, my love, to what a life you condemn me.”

“It is too late to think of that now ; unless she will set you free, you must be brave and bear your life.”

“To have had a glimpse of heaven, only to be hurled from it at the next moment ; child, it is enough to madden one ; no, I am not brave enough to endure that.”

“But it would not be heaven, if we obtained it by wronging others,” she replied, sorrowfully.

“You forgive me ?” he asked, bend

ing over her, with a look of unutterable tenderness.

“I have nothing to forgive, you have not wronged me, but we must say good-bye ; it is best.”

His arm again stole round her, and he drew her gently but firmly towards him.

“Please, don’t,” she whispered.

But he did not release his hold.

“Child, it may be for the last time. I cannot part from you without one kiss,” and he held her as if he would never again release her.

Beatrice had neither the strength nor the heart to resist.

“What a pity we cannot die now,” he murmured ; “it would be better than living apart ; my life, my love, my all,” sobbed the young man, and she felt his tears as they fell on her head.

“Allan, I will always love you,” she whispered. “I will pray for your happi-

ness ; and now let me go, I cannot bear it any longer."

He pressed one last kiss on the soft, loving lips, and then let her go.

Beatrice mechanically replaced her hat, which had fallen on the ground, and turned away with blind eyes, scarcely seeing her way. Her feet felt like lead, and a dull, half-paralysed feeling numbed her limbs, but she stumbled on slowly. Allan Barington had thrown himself on the ground, his face buried in his arms. As she turned, before the path carried her out of sight of where he lay, her eyes went back and rested on him as if to wish him a silent farewell. She saw he had not moved, and with a deep, sobbing sigh, she slowly followed her way homewards.

END OF VOL. II.













